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Technical and Operational Performance Support Program (TOPS)

Year 4 Annual Progress Report

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TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE SUPPORT PROGRAM (TOPS)

YEAR 4 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

(October 1, 2013-September 30, 2014)

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ACRONYMS

ADRA	<i>Adventist Development and Relief Agency</i>	OICI	<i>Opportunities Industrialization Centers International</i>
ANRM	<i>Agriculture and Natural Resource Management</i>	PAC	<i>Program Advisory Committee</i>
CM	<i>Commodity Management</i>	PCI	<i>Project Concern International</i>
CRS	<i>Catholic Relief Services</i>	PIA	<i>Program Improvement Award</i>
DRC	<i>Democratic Republic of Congo</i>	PIRS	<i>Performance indicator reference sheets</i>
FANTA	<i>Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance</i>	PM2A	<i>Preventing Malnutrition in Children under 2 Approach</i>
FFP	<i>Food for Peace</i>	PMP	<i>Performance Management Plan</i>
FSN	<i>Food Security and Nutrition</i>	PR	<i>Program Result</i>
HQ	<i>Headquarters</i>	PVO	<i>Private Voluntary Organization</i>
IPR	<i>Intermediate Program Result</i>	Q	<i>Quarter</i>
I-SMART	<i>Information System for Management, Analysis & Reporting Timeliness</i>	REGIS AG	<i>Resilience and Economic Growth in The Sahel – Accelerated Growth</i>
IYCF(-E)	<i>Infant and Young Child Feeding (in Emergencies)</i>	REGIS ER	<i>REGIS-Enhanced Growth</i>
KM	<i>Knowledge Management</i>	RFA	<i>Request for Applications</i>
MARKit	<i>Market Analysis and Response Kit</i>	SBC	<i>Social and Behavioral Change</i>
MCHN	<i>Maternal-Child Health and Nutrition</i>	SPRING	<i>Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovations in Nutrition Globally</i>
M&E	<i>Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	TIPS	<i>Trials of Improved Practice</i>
MIIS	<i>Monterey Institute of International Studies</i>	TOPS	<i>Technical and Operational Performance Support</i>
NALAN	<i>Nutrition and Agriculture Linkages in Africa Network</i>	WFP	<i>World Food Programme</i>

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program** identifies, synthesizes, adapts and shares the highest quality information and tools to strengthen capacity and establish best practices among implementers of USAID/Office of Food for Peace (FFP) development food assistance projects. The TOPS Program, funded by FFP via a five-year¹ Leader with Associate Cooperative Agreement, has a global mandate to foster opportunities for knowledge exchange among practitioners in the diverse and multi-faceted food security community.

Save the Children leads the TOPS consortium project, and provides technical expertise in three of TOPS seven specialty areas: Commodity Management (CM), Gender, and Nutrition and Food Technology. Primary consortium partners provide technical expertise in four areas: The CORE Group, in Knowledge Management (KM); Food for the Hungry, in Social and Behavioral Change (SBC); Mercy Corps, in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (ANRM); and TANGO International, in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

This report summarizes activities and achievements in **Year 4** (October 2013 through September 2014) of the TOPS Program's five-year lifespan (TOPS Year 4 Work Plan Timetable in **Attachment 1**).

TOPS continues to make **substantial progress in its four Program Results areas** of knowledge *capture*, knowledge *generation*, knowledge *application* and knowledge *sharing*. TOPS measures progress against multiple indicators that are presented in **Attachment 2**, the Performance Management Plan (PMP) section of this report. In Year 4, TOPS has continued to meet or exceed the majority of PMP indicators. TOPS has flexibly responded to stakeholder interest and has continued to support and successfully implement both large and small knowledge sharing activities. By the close of the year, TOPS had expended 72 percent of its budget for Years 1 through 4.

TOPS supports multiple **Task Forces** that are field testing and finalizing modules for the ***TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming*** to be finalized in Year 5, with which staff of development food assistance programs (and food security programs more generally) can pinpoint their skills and skill gaps against **core competencies** for field staff responsible for project implementation. Task Forces endorsed four new **technical tools** in Year 4, bringing the total of TOPS-endorsed tools to 19, and are in the process of creating or modifying 12 more tools that support all technical and cross-cutting areas of focus in the TOPS Program. In response to one of the key recommendations from the TOPS mid-term evaluation, TOPS focused additional efforts on ensuring awareness of recommended tools via multiple channels, including training workshops, TOPS-hosted meetings, the **Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network** bi-weekly newsletter and highlights on the web portal. A **survey of stakeholders** responsible for implementation of food security programming showed that 69 percent were aware of key TOPS-recommended tools, 53 percent reported use of these tools and 63 percent stated they would recommend them to others.

The ***TOPS Review of Promising Practices in FFP Development Food Assistance Projects*** was published in Year 4, capping a review process with a consultative presentation that allowed a wide range of food security actors to contribute their experience and observations. In response to a key recommendation from the mid-term evaluation, TOPS made strategic improvements to its **Small Grants program**, which funds organizations to design, test and share tools, guidance and skills with others in the food security community. Applications increased, the grant review process moved more smoothly, and the quality of the activities proposed improved. Several previous grantees completed and reported upon their grant activities. Guidance for submitting small grants proposals to TOPS, along with the abovementioned report on promising practices, are among the top ten resources downloaded from the FSN Network web portal Year 4.

Capacity strengthening workshops in Year 4 covered numerous topics within the specialty areas of ANRM, CM, M&E, Nutrition and Food Technology, and SBC. TOPS held 15 workshops for more than 400 participants from 17 countries and 3 continents. In particular, a significant number of technical training workshops in ANRM topics were

¹ August 13, 2010, through August 12, 2015.

held in Year 4. In each workshop, TOPS administered **pre- and post-tests** and **satisfaction surveys** whose results guide the content and control the quality of subsequent capacity-strengthening workshops. In response to the mid-term recommendation to **examine more closely the effects the transfer of knowledge and skills** from TOPS-sponsored technical capacity-strengthening workshops, TOPS negotiated an agreement with the Monterrey Institute for International Studies (MIIS) for graduate students to interview a sample of ‘consumers’ of TOPS inputs in all technical sectors under the guidance of the TOPS M&E Specialist. In mid-Year 4, TOPS concluded its partnership with MIIS. The TOPS Team determined that the students had gathered as much information as they could and that TOPS needed more experienced M&E professionals to continue the research and conduct deeper data analysis. TOPS consortium partner TANGO International is continuing the research and will produce a final report in Year 5.

The TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist successfully field tested a modified capacity-strengthening strategy in which training participants developed an action plan to replicate training and **conduct a follow-on field activity**. This was based on the Trials of Improved Practices (TIPs) methodology: *TIPs for TOPS*. Technical assistance was provided via email during the replication process, and the specialist returned in-country to assist participants to assess results and prepare for and co-facilitate a presentation on the process and the results to stakeholders. Participants in commodity management (CM) capacity-strengthening workshops were encouraged to replicate, or ‘echo’, the training with field staff, partners and other stakeholders. Three **CM echo trainings** occurred after a TOPS regional CM workshop in Malawi in October 2013.

The volume and quality of knowledge-sharing activities increased in Year 4. TOPS organized and hosted four major face-to-face events, including the **TOPS program’s fifth and sixth Knowledge Sharing Meetings** (one each in Africa and the US), a streamlined version of a knowledge-sharing meeting that TOPS now calls a *Knowledge Summit* (in Zimbabwe), which included an in-depth session on the topic of resilience within the structure of development food assistance programs. Notably, TOPS won its first **Associate Award** from USAID/Sahel to provide technical assistance in knowledge management to organize an event which launched two regional, USAID-funded resilience programs in the Sahel and prepared some 130 stakeholders to apply a resilience strategy framework, discuss implementation approaches, and form a collaborative network that will grow and contribute to the resilience programs’ effectiveness. Also in Year 4, TOPS held more than a dozen **smaller knowledge-sharing events** in response to stakeholder interest in special topics. Finally, TOPS staff were often invited to share knowledge and materials, including the TOPS report on promising practices and other TOPS-supported resources, at events hosted by other organizations.

The TOPS **Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network** now numbers more than 2,000 members from throughout the global food security community. In addition to in-person networking via workshops, meetings and other events, the TOPS **FSN Network Web Portal** is a locus of engagement between network members. The **resource library** holds nearly 550 tools, manuals and guides. In Year 4, TOPS redesigned and improved its **e-newsletter** (subscriptions up 23 percent from Year 3) and upgraded the portal to allow sharing of new content media. The TOPS KM team made several other improvements to the flexibility, user-friendliness and security of the portal. Activity within three of the seven FSN Network **Interest Groups** is holding steady; four others are on the decline.

TOPS **direct support to FFP initiatives** in Year 4—in addition to the Sahel resilience event noted above—centered on contributing to FFP program policy, RFA processes, and strategic planning. TOPS facilitated consultations, both in-person and virtually, with members of the FSN Network to solicit feedback and suggestions for FFP.

By the close of Year 4, TOPS had initiated and strengthen actions in response to all of the major recommendations of the Year 3 **mid-term evaluation**.

In Year 4, TOPS continued to strengthen and deliver on its primary programming components. In its position as both hub and engine of knowledge generation and exchange, TOPS has mobilized a wide array of stakeholders in the food security community and offers many opportunities to engage within multiple levels of engagement. TOPS impact is increasing with the increasingly active participation of members of the food security community who contribute to, and learn from, their engagement with the FSN Network.

B. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Project Background and Strategic Objectives

The **Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS)** Program identifies, synthesizes, adapts, and shares the highest quality information and tools to build capacity and establish best practices among USAID's development food assistance partners. TOPS is a five-year Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement (August 13, 2010 - August 12, 2015); its global mandate is to enhance opportunities for sharing knowledge and best practices among practitioners in the multifaceted food security community.

In implementing TOPS, Save the Children leads a strong consortium of experienced food security grantees, each of which offers specialized knowledge to the TOPS Program. The principal consortium partners, and their specialty areas, are shown in **Figure 1**.

The TOPS Program brings together an experienced and capable program management team; an engaged membership with participation by the majority of USAID's Food for Peace (FFP) grantees; a commitment to efficient, inclusive, and transparent processes; and respected collaborating and resource partners who bring new thinking and new networks to food security and nutrition programming.

TOPS Strategic Framework

The Strategic Objective for TOPS is:

highest quality information, knowledge, and best practices for improved methodologies in Title II food aid commodity program performance are identified, established, shared, and adapted.

TOPS works towards four Program Results (PR):

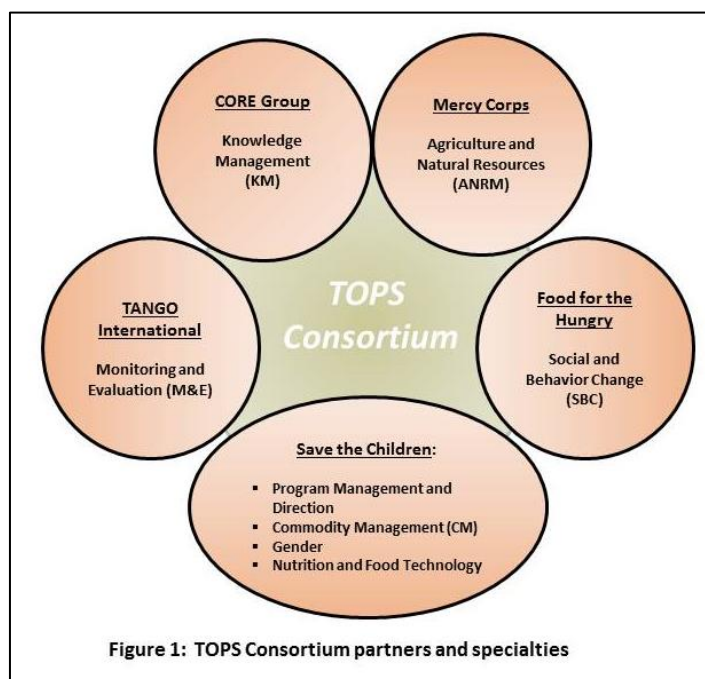


Figure 1: TOPS Consortium partners and specialties

PR1: Knowledge Capture. The TOPS Program deploys several approaches to assess and prioritize the knowledge and implementation capacities of the members of the food security community, with their range and diversity of experience and expertise. TOPS identifies knowledge and skill needs by engaging community members through participatory processes and by soliciting their direct input. The needs assessment process provides an opportunity to identify promising tools and practices in current use, and gaps that must be filled to maximize the quality and effectiveness of development food assistance programming.

PR2: Knowledge Generation. The TOPS Program synthesizes and responds to information gained through PR1: Knowledge Capture strategies to produce reliable, high-quality information in formats that are useful to the food security community. The TOPS Team, through the *Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network* Task Forces, identifies, reviews, and modifies (if necessary) promising tools and practices. Information, tools, and approaches are then vetted and disseminated through the FSN Network.

PR3: Knowledge Application. Members of the food security community work in widely different contexts and environments, and address a variety of food security risks. TOPS develops effective and appropriate capacity-strengthening approaches, both traditional and non-traditional, to strengthen food security practitioners' skills. Familiar, on-the-ground training is still the preferred method of skill transfer, according to program participants,

but TOPS deploys alternative modes for the many practitioners who cannot access traditional trainings due to cost, distance, time, or other constraints. The goal is to leave sustainable capacity-building options in place at TOPS end.

PR4: Knowledge Sharing. TOPS supports and expands knowledge exchange by creating new physical and virtual community knowledge-sharing strategies and venues. The purpose is to strengthen global, regional, and local knowledge sharing and networking. Expanded systems enable a greater number of practitioners to participate in creating, testing, and evaluating promising practices and tools on a continual basis. Establishing habits of interaction for knowledge sharing among the food security community will contribute to sustained learning practices beyond the life of TOPS.

The TOPS Program specializes in seven areas, three of which are *technical* and four of which are *cross-cutting*. **Figure 2** graphically presents TOPS seven specialty areas.

While each of the four PR areas produces stand-alone outputs, they are interdependent components of the whole TOPS Program. Activities undertaken in one PR area are integral to achieving results in others. **Figure 3**, below, summarizes the TOPS Strategic Objective and Program Results.

TOPS Primary Strategies

Since its inception in 2010, TOPS has built a network of food security practitioners around the world to identify, analyze, improve, and share information, tools, and promising practices to improve program performance. TOPS uses four fundamental approaches to address the needs of the food security community:

- **A directed program of capacity-building activities** for USAID’s development food assistance partners, led by TOPS technical staff.
- **An inclusive community of practice** through the FSN Network and its Task Forces and Interest Groups, whose membership is open to all USAID grantees and other food security stakeholders.
- **A food security and nutrition Web Portal** (www.fsnnetwork.org), the foundation of the TOPS knowledge-sharing system.
- **A Small Grants program** that promotes the creation, use, and adaptation of capacity-strengthening tools, and encourages evaluation and documentation, to build the evidence base as part of TOPS work to disseminate best practices to food security and nutrition stakeholders (grantees, local NGOs and other partners, as appropriate), with a focus on field-led and collaborative initiatives.

The success of these strategies increases with the active participation of members of the broader, global food security community who contribute to, and learn from, involvement with TOPS.

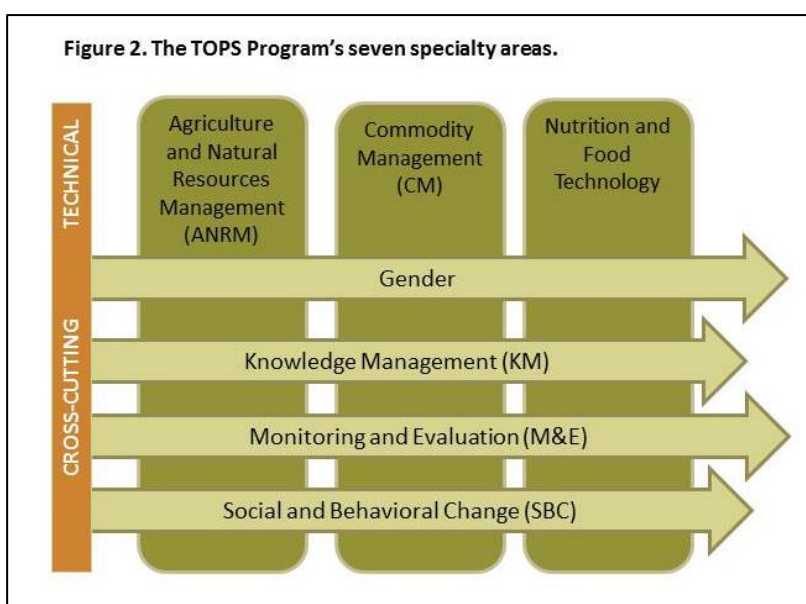
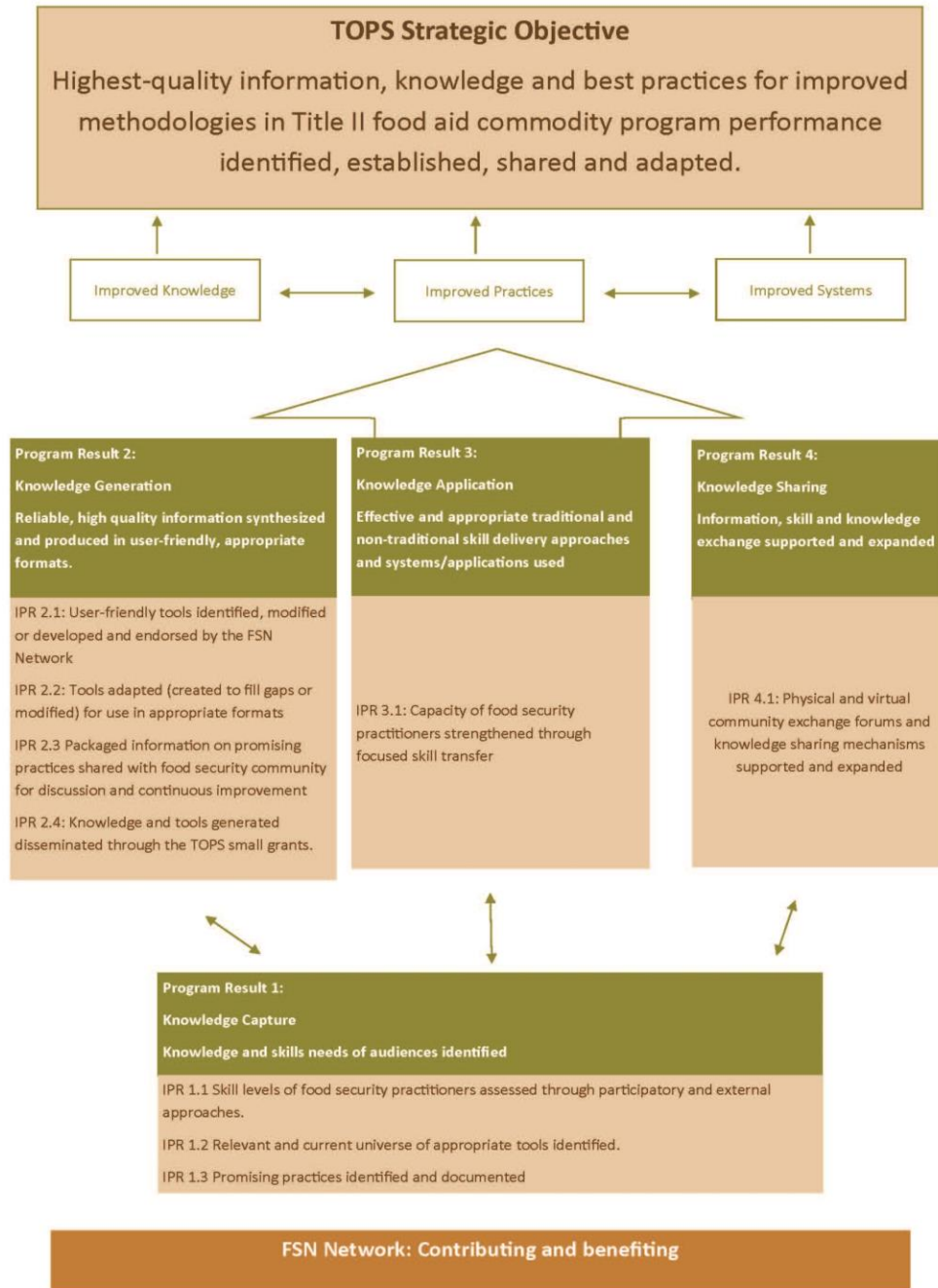


Figure 3
TOPS strategic framework



Year 4 Program Highlights

TOPS Year 4 program activities achieved a great number of short and medium-term goals and also yielded strong progress towards meeting the program's long-term objectives. Of these, notable highlights include:

- First Associate Award issued under TOPS Leader with Associate agreement

With the issuance of the first Associate Award by USAID/Sahel to the TOPS Program, the TOPS KM team helped organize and provided onsite assistance to a *Resilience Workshop* in Niamey, Niger. The workshop provided state-of-the-art guidance in resilience topics for USAID's two new regional resilience awards in Niger and Burkina Faso: Resilience and Economic Growth in The Sahel-Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER) and REGIS-Accelerated Growth (REGIS-AG). The workshop successfully oriented the partners to the USAID resilience strategy for the region and gave implementing partners an opportunity to present their central approaches and planned project activities.

- Use of the core competencies to promote self-assessment of skills

The TOPS technical specialists have incorporated the core competencies, developed with Task Force input and finalized in Year 3, into the development of specific self-assessment modules for TOPS planned final product: *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming*. In Years 2 and 3, the self-assessment modules for commodity management (CM), monitoring and evaluation (M&E), nutrition and food technology, and social and behavioral change (SBC) were extensively field tested. In Year 4, the ANRM Task Force completed field testing. The ANRM results pointed to several important gaps between how individuals rate their skills against their job responsibilities, especially in the following areas: measuring impact and using data; market development; financial services; and technical extension systems. The ANRM team is using this information to focus and increase its capacity-strengthening opportunities based on the assessments.

- Tools

The various TOPS technical sector Task Forces endorsed four new tools in Year 4. These included two in ANRM, one in CM and one in nutrition. This brings to 19 the total number of tools endorsed over the life of the TOPS Program. A major highlight in this area is the TOPS *CM Handbook*, a pocket-sized guide designed for field-friendly use, which was finalized and received enthusiastically by PVO commodity program staff. The handbook was widely distributed with almost 1,000 copies now in circulation amongst USAID and its food assistance program implementing partners. The ANRM Task Force endorsed two tools developed by PVOs involved in Food for Peace-funded programming, including *Five Skills Sets for Smallholder Farmers*, developed by CRS (year unknown), and *Private Sector Engagement Toolkit*, developed by Mercy Corps in 2014.

In addition to published tools, work continued on fifteen other tools that are in process of modification / creation in Year 4. One notable example is the SBC Task Force's continued work on the *Make Me a Change Agent!* Toolkit, with members assisting in field testing individual modules. Key topics include: Behavior Change through Effective Communication, Motivating Conversations, and Behavior Change through Guided Testimonials amongst others.

- Promising Practices

Year 4 saw the publication and dissemination of the *TOPS Review of Promising Practices in Food for Peace Development Food Assistance Projects*. This effort involved review by TOPS technical specialists of final evaluation reports published between FY2006 and FY2010. With TOPS commitment to consultative processes with the food security community, a two-day workshop was held December 5-6, 2013 to share and discuss findings for maternal-child nutrition, agriculture and natural resource management, and cross-cutting aspects of gender and SBC. Findings were also shared and discussed with FFP staff in from the field for the FFP Global meeting in March 2014. This report has proven to be among the most frequently downloaded documents from FSN Network web portal.

The TOPS Program is drawing upon existing expertise among the consortium partners and increasing activity in a new area of promising practices. Consortium partner TANGO International is contributing to the overarching and on-going work within USAID and the global stakeholder community for the development of a resilience measurement framework. During Year 4, presentations on this subject were given at six separate events and has been integrated into the ongoing implementation of the USAID Forward strategy.

- Small Grants

Activity in the Small Grants program was ratcheted up and saw a dramatic increase in Year 4, with more robust promotion by TOPS staff as well as streamlined efforts to make the grant process move more quickly and smoothly for applicants. In total, TOPS received 17 new Micro Grant ($\leq \$50,000$) proposals during Year 4; 25 concept papers for Program Improvement Awards ($\leq \$100,000$) were received, 16 recommended for full proposal submission, 15 full proposals received. After TOPS review, 10 were sent on to FFP for approval, with 5 approved at end of Year 4.

- Capacity Strengthening

Excelling in one of its core functions, TOPS trained over 400 practitioners from 17 countries through capacity-strengthening workshops. TOPS initiated activities in Year 4 in response to mid-term evaluation recommendation for more rigorous assessment of the application and transfer of knowledge and skills to project implementation by previous workshop participants. The content of all capacity-strengthening workshops is developed in line with the core competencies defined by the relevant technical Task Force and in consultation with all stakeholders. As in previous years, topics focused on key areas where gaps in skills have been identified, such as drought cycle management (ANRM), quantitative data analysis (M&E), enhanced knowledge and skills for handling and managing FFP commodities (CM), and the integration of the Care Groups approach (SBC). TOPS also continued to integrate gender as a cross-cutting theme in all activities. In particular, the CM team and the Gender Specialist developed a session on gender integration which was incorporated into the CM training module. In Year 4 TOPS agriculture and nutrition specialists continued to collaborate on the topic of the integration of agriculture and nutrition.

The TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist successfully field tested a strategy in which training participants developed training replication action plans and conducted follow-on field activities. Technical assistance was provided via email during replication, and the specialist returned in-country to assist participants to assess results and co-facilitate a presentation on the process and the results to stakeholders. In this same vein, the CM technical team supported three separate replication trainings for its CM curriculum. In these trainings, participants who successfully took part in a regional workshop, independently held and coordinated a training whereby they presented the TOPS CM training materials to staff at the local level.

- The FSN Network web portal

Multiple upgrades were implemented to the Web portal in Year 4, including adding video images to the Knowledge Sharing Meeting pages, creating a consolidated discussion forums page for easier interface, and upgrading the web portal content management system to a newer version.

- TOPS FSN Network Knowledge Sharing Events

Year 4 saw significant activity around its traditional Knowledge Sharing Events beginning with the successful *Fifth Knowledge Sharing Meeting for Francophone Africa* held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and which hosted 136 participants from 17 countries and 39 organizations and the *Sixth Knowledge Sharing Meeting* in Washington, D.C.

TOPS also started providing TOPS knowledge management and technical sector expertise to a new category of activities - *Knowledge Summits*. These activities are responding to requests from Food for Peace to assist country-specific knowledge sharing activities to maximize dialogue and reflection on program strategies throughout the life cycle of the FFP-funded projects.

C. TOPS PROGRAM RESULTS AND PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES²

PR1: Knowledge Capture. Knowledge and skill needs of audiences identified.

Work in each of the TOPS seven technical and cross-cutting areas of specialty is spearheaded by an FSN Network Task Force, and the seven Task Forces are primary actors in identifying ways in which TOPS can meet the needs of the food security community. Volunteer members of the Task Forces represent a broad array of PVOs and other stakeholders in the food security community, including all PVOs with existing FFP-funded programs (see section PR4, Knowledge Sharing, for more information on the Task Forces).

Each Task Force defined a set of minimum core competencies for field staff in its specialty area. The competencies are the basis of several mechanisms that TOPS uses to assess and strengthen capacity, including:

- Development of modules for each specialty area that will form the *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming*
 - Formation of the content of pre- and post-tests linked to capacity-strengthening workshops, and follow-up with training participants to assess skills transfer
 - Identification or modification/creation of tools—guides, manuals, and more—to help field staff implement effective programming
-

IPR 1.1: Skill levels of food security practitioners *assessed* through participatory and external approaches.

TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit in Core Competencies for Field Staff

By the end of Year 3, the TOPS-supported Task Forces had completed a draft set of **minimum core competencies** for field staff implementing FFP-funded programming in the technical and cross-cutting areas of: ANRM, CM, gender, M&E, Nutrition and Food Technology, and SBC.³ The competencies describe the skills and knowledge needed by a *key staff member of a project in the field* who is responsible for the quality of that specific technical or cross-cutting aspect of project activities. The number of core competencies are extensive for each specialty area. In Year 4, TOPS technical specialists and Task Force members considered reducing the number of core competencies while retaining a focus on critical skills. However, there was agreement that few to no core competencies should be removed, and only minor modifications were made.

Each TOPS Task Force uses its core competencies to create a module or modules for the planned ***TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming***. TOPS intends that this toolkit will be a sustainable legacy of the program so that field staff will use the modules to rate their capacity according to defined core competencies within each specialty area, and organizations can use the results to plan training and other skills-building activities. During the life of the TOPS Program, the results of field testing are also used to inform TOPS planning for capacity-strengthening activities. By Year 4, self-assessment modules for three specialty areas – M&E, Nutrition and Food Technology, and SBC – had been extensively field tested. Testing of the modules for ANRM, CM (at the Manager level) and Gender was initiated. All modules have been found to be useful; however, all sectors have faced a challenge in ensuring timely and thorough response and use of the tool during field testing.

² The TOPS Year 4 Work Plan Timetable can be found in **Attachment 1**.

³ In previous years' reports, TOPS presented two related topics separately: *defining core competencies for field staff*, and using those core competencies in modules of a forthcoming *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit*. Because work in the former topic is largely complete, it no longer merits its own section. The two topics are combined here.

During the TOPS Year 5 Annual Strategic Planning Meeting (which took place near the end of Year 4), a revised format for the CM module was shared with the team. This format uses drop-down menus to facilitate filling out the self-assessment. The team confirmed the user-friendliness of the revised format and discussed the variety of formats each has used and the various needs for a toolkit that would be sustainable. The TOPS Team now plans to include several versions of each module in the comprehensive toolkit: a format with drop-down menus that is user-friendly via the internet; a format that can easily be modified to fit project or PVO needs; and a format that can easily tally multiple self-assessment results for regional or global review.

Agriculture & Natural Resource Management

Year 4 saw the ANRM Task Force discuss modifying the self-assessment module by specific positions or responsibilities. Members agreed that this change would not be an improvement, because a single staff may have a variety of responsibilities, depending on project strategies. Rather, each implementing organization should determine which core competencies are most important for each position, and modify the TOPS module accordingly.

The ANRM Task Force edited its self-assessment module (drafted in Year 3), then asked members to review it to make sure all were satisfied with the final product. Task Force members then distributed the module to field staff. By the end of Year 4, the ANRM team received 16 completed self-assessments from staff representing a total of seven organizations and located in seven different countries. The 16 staff hold a variety of relevant positions including agriculture and livelihood manager, disaster risk reduction director, and rural finance specialists.

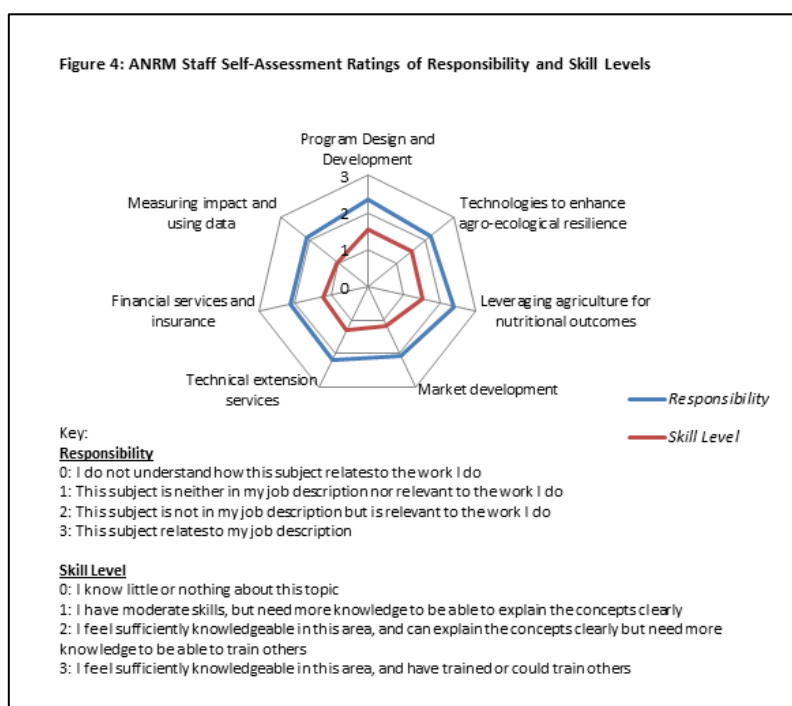
The aggregated ANRM self-assessment data (**Figure 4**) highlighted four core competencies with the *largest gaps between staff*

responsibility and perceived skill level: measuring impact and using data, market development, financial services, and technical extension systems. The Task Force will review TOPS activities undertaken in each of the topics and plan for increased assistance to project staff, including the promotion of ANRM tools that correspond to these competencies. No skill level reached an average score of two: all were below the level of “I feel sufficiently knowledgeable in this area, and can explain the concepts clearly but need more knowledge to be able to train others.” The ANRM team will also continue to provide support in the other competencies.

As for all technical and cross-cutting sectors in TOPS, the self-assessment results are used to influence TOPS ANRM activities that can benefit all programs, such as tools and resource identification and capacity-strengthening workshop structure.

Commodity Management

The CM Task Force finalized a self-assessment module for the position of Commodity Manager in Year 3, and tested it with four people who held that position. In Year 4, the module was further field tested in six countries



with staff from six PVOs. While the results were useful, participants found the format unwieldy and time-consuming. A new template, featuring drop-down menus in a new format, was developed and further tested and shared with the TOPS Team and will be incorporated into the final comprehensive toolkit.

In Year 4, the CM Task Force also drafted a set of core competencies for the position of Warehouse Manager and based on members' recommendations in Year 3.

Gender

By the close of Year 3, the Gender Task Force had a working version of core competencies, drafted with a broad perspective rather than one that focused on food security programs. In Year 4, therefore, the group revised the competencies to better reflect the gender integration competencies needed in FFP-funded programs. As part of the revision, gender concepts from the July 2013 version of Automated Directives System 205 were included to align core competencies with some of the expectations outlined in that policy and operational guidance. This will help implementers better understand USAID expectations vis-à-vis gender integration. Modifications were also made to match updated FFP requirements involving gender analysis and M&E during program implementation. The gender core competencies are meant as standards for program staff whose positions are devoted entirely or in part to gender.

During a Task Force meeting in February 2014, members reviewed the updated list of core competencies. Their feedback was incorporated, and the new version was circulated to members for final comment. In March, the core competencies were finalized and posted to the Gender Task Force page on the FSN Network for easy access for members of the food security community.

The gender self-assessment module was developed as an online survey tool and distributed to current implementers of FFP-funded programming in the beginning of the final month of Year 4. Over that month, 11 people filled out the survey: two each from the U.S., Bangladesh, Liberia and Zimbabwe; and one each from Ethiopia, Uganda and Sierra Leone. The 11 responses came from six different implementing agencies: ACDI/VOCA, CNFA, Food for the Hungry (FH), Helen Keller International (HKI), Project Concern International (PCI), and Save the Children. Eight respondents indicated that they had training and education in another sector, while three had training and education in gender integration. Responses indicated the following training needs:

- Organizational gender policies and information on identifying and training other staff
- Integrating gender in other technical components (including training materials)
- Guidance on supporting the gender analysis process
- Incorporating recommendations from gender analysis and ensuring activity implementation
- Actively engaging in the M&E process including data collection, analysis, and the reporting process
- Using data to modify program activities

It was not surprising that respondents indicated a desire for more training on *gender integration within other sectors*. These initial results show, however, that the Gender Task Force may reiterate with implementers the need for organizations to be proactive in regard to providing more training and information on *organizational policies and procedures*.

In Year 5, the Gender Task Force will target the self-assessment module directly to programs, in contrast to this initial, and broad, casting of the net at the end of Year 4.

Monitoring & Evaluation

As the M&E Task Force had comprehensively reviewed the M&E core competencies in Year 3, no additional changes or additions were made in Year 4. The Task Force maintained two levels of competencies: one each for M&E Manager and M&E Officer.

The M&E self-assessment modules for both positions were developed into new online survey tools. The tools were translated by consultants into French and Spanish and several TOPS PVO contacts in the field reviewed the translations. The survey tools were also field tested by several PVO contacts. Links to the online survey modules were then sent to PVOs implementing FFP-funded programming to encourage the use of these tools. Altogether 64 M&E practitioners conducted self-assessment through use of the online survey tools: 26 practitioners at the M&E Manager level, with 18 using the version of the tool in English, 7 in French and 1 in Spanish; and 38 at the M&E Officer level, with 32 in English and 6 in French.

Results point to the need for capacity strengthening in all core competency areas, but with the greatest need in the areas of data quality assurance and the use of qualitative methods. Findings also indicate that most lack confidence in providing training to colleagues or subordinates even on the topics for which they rate their capacity highest. Another important finding was that some of the crucial competencies, such as M&E budgeting or data analysis, are not part of staff job descriptions. The TOPS M&E Task Force has developed sample Job Descriptions to help partners align positions with necessary core competencies.

Nutrition & Food Technology

Modest modifications to Nutrition & Food Technology core competencies were completed in Year 4, following Year 3's extensive field testing of the draft nutrition module for the *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit*. That testing, and review of results by Task Force members at the end of Year 3, demonstrated that almost all the core competencies were useful for field staff, and only minor modifications were suggested. Translation of the Nutrition & Food Technology core competencies and self-assessment module into French was begun; finalization and field testing in French is pending for Year 5, along with conversion of the module into multiple formats, i.e. easily revised, easily used online, and easily tabulated.

Social & Behavioral Change

The SBC Task Force developed core competencies for field staff in Year 1 of the TOPS Program, then used the competencies in Years 2 and 3 to field test a self-assessment module in SBC skills for the *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit*. In Year 4, the Task Force members analyzed the data and determined that field testing had produced very homogenous results that were not as useful as desired for prioritizing and planning capacity-strengthening activities. Therefore, Task Force members did additional testing of the module by completing the self-assessment themselves. In Year 5, the Task Force will decide upon any revisions to the list of core competencies or the user guidance to the use of the self-assessment tool.

Technical Assessment of Skills among Field Practitioners

TOPS conducts pre- and post-tests in conjunction with all its training activities, to inform planning and to report on a key indicator in TOPS Performance Management Plan (PMP, **Attachment 2**). In Year 4, the majority of participants continue to show greatly increased knowledge from pre-test to post-test, with 83 percent scoring 70 percent or higher in post-test assessment. TOPS continues to not only analyze the pre- and post-test results and share these with training workshop participants and other stakeholders, but also to informally consult with participants to ensure that the test questions and answer formats are easily comprehended. TOPS also added a session at the end of capacity-strengthening workshops in which participants develop action plans for knowledge application and transfer within their projects. TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist field tested a strategy in which training participants developed an action plan to replicate training and conduct a follow-on field activity. Technical assistance was provided via email during the replication process, and the specialist returned in-country to assist participants to assess results and prepare for and co-facilitate a presentation on the process and the results to stakeholders. (See more details on pre- and post-test results in section PR3, Knowledge Application.)

In response to recommendations from the TOPS mid-term evaluation (completed in Year 3), strategies were initiated in Year 4 for one-on-one follow-up with field practitioners who had previously participated in TOPS capacity-strengthening activities. TOPS negotiated an agreement with the Monterrey Institute for International

Studies (MIIS) for graduate students to interview a sample of ‘consumers’ of TOPS inputs in all technical sectors, under the guidance of the TOPS M&E Specialist. In mid-Year 4, TOPS concluded its partnership with MIIS. It was determined that the students had gathered as much information as they could and that TOPS needed more experienced M&E professionals to continue the research and conduct deeper data analysis.

TOPS consortium partner TANGO International has contracted consultants to continue the research and will produce a final report early in Year 5. The research, which is predominantly qualitative through interviews with previous participants in TOPS capacity-strengthening workshops, is focused on the level of knowledge and skills that has been retained, the level of application of new knowledge and skills to daily work, and the level of transfer of new knowledge and skills to colleagues within the work environment. In Year 4, the consultants worked closely with the TOPS Team to agree on the selection criteria for interviews and the TOPS Team provided detailed information on the objectives and content of previous training workshops. With TOPS input, the consultants developed a guideline for interviews that included both open ended questions and questions with categorical answers. Those interviewed are also asked to rate the value of workshop content, the level of application to the job and the level of transfer to others. Interviews also include requests for any suggestions to improve future training activities. (See also the section on Program Management, below.)

PR2: Knowledge Generation. Reliable, high-quality information synthesized and produced in user-friendly, appropriate formats.

TOPS Activities Threaded through PR1: Knowledge Capture and PR2: Knowledge Generation

TOPS work to identify (PR1) and fill (PR2) gaps in appropriate tools for development food security practitioners is logically linked, and is therefore discussed as one in this section.

The TOPS Team, in collaboration with the FSN Network Task Forces, uses several strategies to identify and fill gaps: they evaluate and endorse existing tools; modify existing tools to better meet needs; and create new tools where none exist but where the need is evident. TOPS then disseminates tools through numerous channels, including capacity-strengthening workshops, non-traditional training events such as webinars, knowledge-sharing events, and the FSN Network web portal and e-newsletter.

TOOLS: Knowledge Capture and Knowledge Generation

- **IPR 1.2:** Relevant and current universe of appropriate tools (and gaps in tools) identified.
- **IPR 2.1:** User-friendly tools identified, modified or developed, and endorsed by the FSN Network.
- **IPR 2.2:** Tools adapted (created to fill gaps or modified) for use in appropriate formats.

Tools endorsed by TOPS

Year 4 saw Task Forces endorse four new tools (**Table 1**), bringing the total of TOPS-endorsed tools to 19. TOPS continued to use its multiple communication channels -- including notice in the bi-weekly FSN Network newsletter, highlights on the web portal, provision of soft copies during training activities and/or knowledge sharing events, and informal email communication with contacts in the field -- to disseminate and raise awareness of all but two of these 19 endorsed tools.⁴

⁴ Two previously endorsed tools are no longer disseminated by TOPS: *Positive Deviance/Hearth: A Resource Guide for Sustainably Rehabilitating Malnourished Children* (CORE Group 2002), based on findings and recommendations of the FAFSA-2

Table 1
Tools Endorsed in Y4

<i>Title of Tool</i>	<i>Contributing Sources</i>	<i>Usefulness</i>
ANRM		
<i>Five Skills Sets for Smallholder Farmers</i> , Catholic Relief Service (CRS), (year unknown)	CRS in collaboration with other organizations including the support of 130 practitioners from 19 organizations and 12 countries. The manuals were prepared by facilitators, field agents and community leaders working with poor rural communities. USAID / Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services provided financial support for the editing and graphic design of the guides, and for the development of e-learning courses.	These guides present an integrated and sequential approach to strengthening the capacity of farmers—men and women—to link with markets, manage their resources, achieve more sustainable production, improve their market performance, and stay innovative and competitive. The five skill sets are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. organizing democratically for collective decision-making 2. managing savings and lending to protect key assets, smooth consumption and encourage investment 3. selecting, establishing and growing an enterprise 4. managing natural resources for sustainable agricultural production 5. managing knowledge to innovate and maintain competitiveness in a changing market
<i>Private Sector Engagement Toolkit</i> , Mercy Corps 2014	Developed by Mercy Corps' Economic and Market Development Technical Support Unit	The toolkit promotes and deepens common understanding of private sector engagement, and helps practitioners better recognize, prepare for and respond to these partnership opportunities. It forms the basis for program-specific and more general private sector engagement training. It features relevant Mercy Corps program examples with detailed lessons learned, and includes tools, tip sheets and resources that support effective engagement. Mercy Corps tested the toolkit over the past two years, and applied it to its programs across the globe.
CM		
<i>Commodity Management Handbook</i> , TOPS 2013.	Handbook topics were identified via a review of 19 CM audit reports from FFP-funded programs (1999-2012) and CM problems/issues noted in those reports	The need for this tool was identified in Year 3. Several CM Task Force members reviewed and field tested it before finalization, endorsement and dissemination in Q3 of Year 4. The handbook has a Q&A format and is organized in topic-specific chapters for handy reference by CM staff.
Nutrition & Food Technology		
<i>Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies (IYCF-E) Toolkit</i> , Version 2, Save the Children 2014.	Save the Children won and used a Micro Grant (Attachment 3) to significantly revise the IYCF-E Toolkit it previously developed in 2012	The toolkit provides guidance for stand-alone IYCF-E programs which may not include activities using the Community Management of Acute Malnutrition approach. The toolkit was updated and its layout revised to be more user-friendly. Contents can be downloaded in these categories: (a) the <i>Core Toolkit</i> of minimum essential documents; (b) <i>Key Implementation Resources</i> , or additional useful documents; and (c) <i>References</i> such as guidelines, guidance notes, and examples. The toolkit was translated into Arabic and will be field tested early in Year 5 by a broad range of PVO emergency response participants after a training workshop for the Middle East Region, held at the end of Year 4 in Turkey. Early in Year 5 the toolkit will also be translated into French and disseminated.

report, and an *Indicator Performance Tracking* tool (shared by CRS) that was found to need more detailed guidance prior to further dissemination.

The Gender Task Force continued to focus efforts on ensuring they have gathered tools from relevant resources. The KM Task Force was inactive for much of Year 4 and ultimately revitalized with new leadership. The M&E Task Force focused specific efforts to promote use of a previously endorsed tool, the *Guide to Developing a Scope of Work for Mid-Term Evaluation of Title II Development Food Assistance Programs*, TOPS 2012, to those programs about to conduct mid-term evaluation. The SBC Task Force reviewed several tools during Year 4, but determined that none rose to the quality, completeness and/or wide applicability standards that merit TOPS endorsement.

Identify gaps among tools and fill gaps

An important, ongoing TOPS strategy is to identify and fill gaps in tools needed for effective development food assistance programming. Throughout Year 4, TOPS staff and the TOPS-supported FSN Network Task Forces collaborated to fill gaps identified to date during the life of the TOPS program (**Table 2**).

Table 2
Tools in Process of Modification or Creation to Fill Identified Gaps⁵

<i>Title of Tool</i>	<i>Source and Modification/Creation Activity</i>
ANRM	
<i>ANRM Technical Guides</i> , TOPS 2014 1. Farmer field schools 2. Financial planning for small farmers 3. Agriculture-nutrition integration 4. Conservation agriculture 5. Post-harvest	The need for short guides that summarize technical information and link readers to key resources was identified in Year 3, and five guides were drafted. In Year 4, the first two guides were edited, including reviews by the ANRM Task Force, and the series design template was finalized. This design will serve as a model for the completion of the remaining guides in Year 5.
<i>TOPS ANRM Technical Manual: Permagardens</i>	A need for guidance to improve programming associated with home gardens was identified early in Year 4. TOPS training and knowledge sharing activities on permagardens in Year 4 (Table 5 and Table 8) informed the development of the manual which provides detail on how to implement permagarden activities. The manual will be completed in Year 5 and will complement a permagarden training workshop already developed by TOPS.
CM	
<i>Gender in Commodity Management: A training module for CM staff</i>	TOPS developed a gender training module as part of standard CM training for HQ and field staff. It covers gender integration in both programmatic (e.g. storage of commodities) and operational components (e.g. processes of distributing commodities to beneficiaries). The module aims for a common understanding of important definitions, increase knowledge of gender in CM, and understanding of the need for gender integration. In Year 4 the module was field tested in CM capacity-strengthening workshops. A facilitator's guide is underway, to be finalized in Year 5.
KM	
<i>11 Ways⁶ to Create an Environment of Inquiry at Your Organization.</i>	This tool was drafted in Year 3 based on key KM practices identified from a Year 2 survey of knowledge-sharing practices at the HQ of PVOs that implement food security programming. The KM team plans to incorporate more examples of evidence, such as case studies, in Year 5 and have the Task Force review the final document.
M&E	
<i>Preparing for an Evaluation: Guidelines and tools for pre-evaluation planning</i>	This tool is being developed with partial information from two tools that CRS developed in 2008 using a USAID institutional capacity-building grant: <i>M&E Module: Guidelines and tools for pre-evaluation planning</i> and <i>Managing and implementing an evaluation</i> . In Year 4, the Task Force reviewed these guides and determined what to retain/modify. The TOPS M&E Specialist, with an intern, conducted additional research and drafted four chapters, with six more to be drafted in Year 5.

⁵ Note that there are tools under development through the TOPS Small Grants program, but not yet endorsed by TOPS (Attachment 3).

⁶ This tool was previously referred to as '15 Steps to Create.....'; as it has been revised, some steps have been consolidated.

Title of Tool	Source and Modification/Creation Activity
<i>M&E Guide for Practitioners Working on Title II Projects</i>	In Year 3, the M&E Task Force identified tools by ADRA, Mercy Corps, CRS, ACDI/VOCA, International Fund for Agricultural Development and others, many of which were developed under previous institutional capacity-building grants. In Year 4, the Task Force drafted and reviewed three chapters, and the content of two more was outlined. The development of the final tool is pending the release of the new FFP M&E reporting policy and guidance.
<i>Guidance for reviewing M&E data quality</i>	The Task Force identified this gap in Year 3. In Year 4, initial review by the TOPS M&E Specialist reviewed various tools and identified several potential resources, including <i>Tips on Conducting Data Quality Analysis</i> , developed by USAID in 2010. The development of this tool has been deferred to Year 5 due to the volume of work on multiple tools (including facilitator's guides for all TOPS capacity-strengthening workshops).
Nutrition & Food Technology	
<i>Learning from the Trials of Improved Practices method: Guide to conducting Trials of Improved Practice (TIPs) for TOPS to build BCC capacity and change IYCF practices</i>	FFP-funded projects in Madagascar and Malawi field tested draft guidance, including training materials, facilitator's guide, and fieldwork reporting tools ⁷ , in Year 4. The tools were found to be functional, and field staff suggested some additional materials. These suggestions will be incorporated in Year 5 and the guide presented to the Task Force and external stakeholders for review.
<i>Nutrition Program Design Assistant: Reference Guide and Workbook, April 2010; CORE Group.</i>	As members of a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for this tool, TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist, along with a TOPS-funded consultant, developed revisions to the workbook for Step 1 Parts I-III, gathering and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, and Step 3, reviewing existing health and nutrition services, in Year 3. These revisions were further simplified in Year 4 and approved by the TAG. FANTA will incorporate these, along with updates to the reference guide (e.g. changes in international recommendations for micronutrients), in Year 5. TOPS will continue to promote to the TAG the inclusion of a tool to guide program design through the topic of "persons of influence for behavior change" prepared as a rough draft in Year 3.
<i>Supervising the quality of anthropometric measurement of height</i>	This tool was drafted and field tested in Year 3, and is pending review to ensure harmonization with any new FFP M&E reporting policy and guidance.
<i>Training package for hand-calculation of the Minimum Acceptable Diet indicator</i>	
SBC	
<i>Care Groups: A Training Manual for Program Design and Implementation</i>	A draft manual that filled gaps and improved content was field tested in Years 2-4. The manual was completed at the end of Year 4. SBC Task Force members were continuously involved in the manual's review, and Food for the Hungry (non-TOPS) staff provided significant time and effort to review and edit the manual. The draft manual was also used during a training workshop conducted in Washington, DC in February 2014, and participant comments were incorporated into the draft (Table 5). The draft manual was also shared at a Care Group Technical Advisory Group meeting hosted by the CORE Group in May 2014 (Table 9) with support from a TOPS Micro Grant (Attachment 3).
<i>Make Me a Change Agent! Toolkit</i>	The SBC Task Force and the CORE Group SBC Working Group have collaborated to share short lessons on a variety of SBC approaches, including key topics such as 'Empathy: Understanding the Perspective of Another' and 'Motivating Conversations.' In Year 4, various tools from this toolkit were field tested; more field testing is planned for Year 5.

For **sustainability of technical training activities** after the TOPS Program ends, all TOPS technical staff worked in Year 4 on drafting training facilitation guides to accompany support materials (such as slides and handouts) that have been used throughout the life of the TOPS Program in technical capacity-strengthening workshops.

⁷ Draft guidance for the training and fieldwork was drawn from *Designing for Dialogue*, prepared for the Health and Human Resources Analysis Project by Kate Dickin and Marcia Griffiths, The Manoff Group, and Ellen Piwoz, Support for Analysis and Research in Africa project/Academy for Educational Development in June 1997.

Additional strategies to disseminate useful tools

TOPS technical specialists draw upon **resources and tools beyond those prioritized for Task Force collaboration** to develop capacity-building workshop agendas and coordinate technical sessions for FSN Network knowledge-sharing events. Some of the tools disseminated to the food security community through these channels in Year 4 are found in **Table 3**.

Table 3
Other Tools Disseminated through TOPS Events in Year 4

Tool Title	Author/Source	Activity in which TOPS Disseminated Tool
ANRM		
<i>What is Drought Cycle Management?</i>	Oxfam 2010 http://www.karamojahealthdatacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/2-WHAT-IS-DROUGHT-CYCLE-MANAGEMENT.pdf	This document, which TOPS frequently disseminates, was shared with attendees of the ANRM capacity-strengthening workshop in Uganda in October 2013.
ANRM and Nutrition		
<i>Understanding and Applying Primary Pathways and Principles. Technical Brief #1.</i>	Herforth, Anna, and Jody Harris. 2014. Improving Nutrition through Agriculture Technical Brief Series. Arlington, VA: USAID/SPRING Project, 2014	SPRING Project staff gave a presentations on the pathways during the TOPS FSN Network <i>Fifth Knowledge Sharing Meeting</i> for Francophone Africa in November 2013. Small groups worked to identify pathways in their programs, key interventions and existing constraints.
ANRM and SBC		
<i>A Practical Guide to Conducting a Barrier Analysis</i>	Kittle, Bonnie. New York, NY: Helen Keller International, 2013	This guide is used as the basis for SBC sessions during ANRM workshops. The English version was used in Uganda in October 2013. The guide was translated into French and used in Francophone Africa in November 2013, and translated into Spanish and used in the March 2014 in Guatemala.
Gender		
<i>Integrating Gender throughout a Project's Life Cycle: a guidance document for international development organizations and practitioners</i>	Land O'Lakes International Development, 2013	In December 2013, Land O'Lakes presented this tool to the food security community at a special event in Washington, DC (Table 8). TOPS Gender Specialist, with support from KM staff, solicited additional feedback from the community via a survey. Land O'Lakes submitted a PIA proposal to revise (Attachment 3).
Nutrition and SBC		
Various reports, bulletins and guidance notes from The Grandmother Project	The Grandmother Project www.grandmotherproject.org	The Grandmother Project's founder delivered a session during the TOPS capacity-strengthening workshop in Burkina Faso, November 2013 (Table 5). Participants were directed to the project website for further guidance.
SBC		
Barrier Analysis Questionnaires	Barrier Analysis Questionnaires, TOPS, 2014 http://www.fsnnetwork.org/barrier-analysis-questionnaires	TOPS created a set of 30 Barrier Analysis Questionnaires and guidance on adapting them. The questionnaires address behaviors in maternal and child nutrition, health, water and sanitation and agriculture. Reference to the questionnaires is included in all SBC sessions during TOPS capacity-strengthening workshops in nutrition or ANRM.

PROMISING PRACTICES: Knowledge Capture and Knowledge Generation

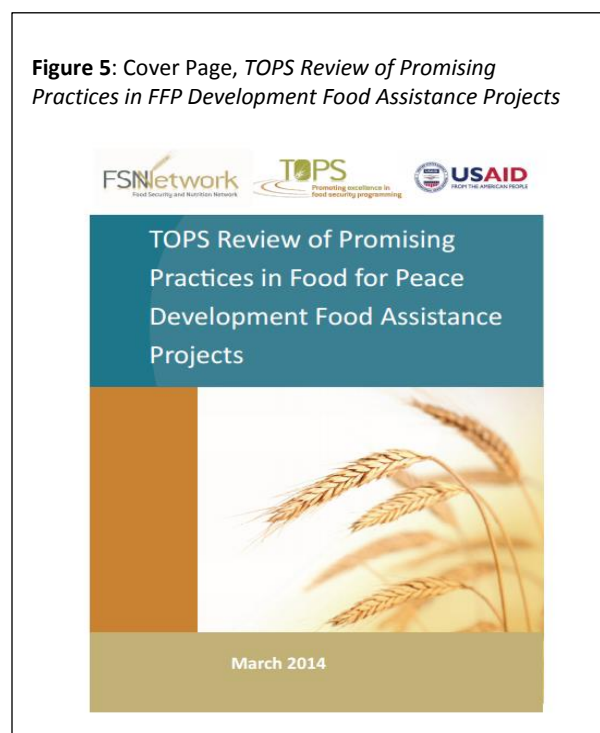
- **IPR 1.3:** Promising practices identified and documented.
 - **IPR 2.3:** Packaged information on promising practices shared with food security community for discussion and continuous improvement.
-

TOPS technical specialists and FSN Network Task Force members continuously seek to identify and capture promising practices in development food assistance programming. They do so via a) review of existing documentation, b) special activities within the TOPS-supported FSN Network, c) personal contacts and regional/in-country activities, d) representation and participation in other networks, and e) the TOPS Small Grants program.

Review development food assistance project final evaluation reports to identify and share promising practices

In Year 3, the TOPS Program completed a review of final evaluation reports (FY2006 to FY2010) from FFP-funded development food assistance projects and prepared a paper (**Figure 5**) on promising practices culled from those evaluations in which a project had achieved reductions in stunting (height-for-age Z scores) among children under age five and improvements in the intermediate results associated with the promising practice identified. Early in Year 4, this 'living document' was shared and discussed with stakeholders during a two-day event sponsored by TOPS (Table 8).

Figure 5: Cover Page, *TOPS Review of Promising Practices in FFP Development Food Assistance Projects*



Day One focused on maternal-child health and nutrition (MCHN) practices. Day Two was devoted to ANRM practices. Cross-cutting aspects related to gender and SBC were included on both days. On average, 30 stakeholders attended each day, including representatives of PVO implementers of FFP-funded programming, technical assistance providers funded by USAID, and FFP staff. General consensus was achieved on the promising practices identified, and participants suggested additional practices of interest. TOPS technical specialists took these comments into consideration as they finalized the report: *TOPS Review of Promising Practices in Food for Peace Development Food Assistance Projects*, published in March 2014 and posted to the FSN Network Website.⁸ The report was further disseminated through the FSN Network bi-weekly newsletter. **To date, it is one of the most frequently downloaded documents on the web portal** (see more information in section PR4, Knowledge Sharing.).

TOPS considers the review an initial 'living document' and a strong starting point. TOPS has invited PVOs and others to submit for review any final evaluation, special study or

documentation of a FFP-funded development food assistance project that highlights a promising practice which should be added to this report. The report provides a link to a site to submit additional promising practices but to-date no additional documentation has been submitted. TOPS has also encouraged members of the food security community to submit an application to the TOPS Small Grants program (see IPR 2.4 for more information) to field test and document any potential promising practice they have identified and, in Year 4, there has been positive response to this TOPS strategy to gather promising practices.

⁸ http://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/resource_uploads/tops_review_of_promising_practices_march_2014_final.pdf

The key findings of the *TOPS Review of Promising Practices in Food for Peace Development Food Assistance Projects* were also shared with FFP HQ and mission staff in a session attended by approximately 15 staff on March 12 during the FFP Global Meeting in the Washington DC Metro area (Table 9). The presentation was facilitated by TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist and the Director of Food Security for TOPS partner, Mercy Corps.

Identify and share promising practices in use of a resilience measurement framework

The TOPS Program, with leadership by the president of TOPS partner TANGO International, has continued to contribute to the overarching and on-going work within USAID to look at promising practices that can feed into the development of a resilience measurement framework in Year 4. The president of TANGO International and/or consultants collaborating with TANGO International, gave presentations on resilience at six events, ranging from the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association in Washington, DC in October 2013, to the USAID/FFP Global Meeting in Arlington, VA in March of 2014, to a special learning session presentation during a Knowledge Summit facilitated by TOPS for USAID Zimbabwe in August 2014 (Table 8 and Table 9). In Year 4 TANGO International continued to develop papers on three resilience-associated topics: *Measuring Community Resilience*, *Measuring Shocks*, and *Measuring Resilience Capacities*. In addition, in Year 4 and continuing into Year 5, TANGO International will continue to confer with FFP on the development of resilience content in the new FFP Strategic Plan. This contribution by TOPS has been critical to playing a role within the broader goals of the USAID Forward strategy.

IPR 2.4: Knowledge and tools generated and disseminated through the TOPS Small Grants program.

The TOPS Small Grants program offers two funding mechanisms—the Micro Grant Award and the Program Improvement Award (PIA)—to help organizations design, test and share promising practices, tools, guidance and skills that can help others in the food security community design and implement stronger programs.

- **Micro Grant Awards** TOPS ***Micro Grants*** (funded up to \$50,000) are designed to build sustainable, high quality knowledge and technical skills within FFP grantees, implementers, partners and collaborators, and ultimately to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of development food assistance programs. The emphasis in Micro Grant Awards is on designing innovative approaches, strengthening existing best practices and skills, disseminating promising new practices, and reaching a wide audience of practitioners.
- **Program Improvement Awards** TOPS PIA (funded up to \$100,000) are designed for food security and nutrition implementing organizations to conduct and/or document innovative, best practice-focused activities, operations research, or pilot programs to test or strengthen approaches for efficient, effective delivery of FFP-funded programming. PIAs emphasize activities that will produce evidence-based results, and provide recommendations to help others adopt innovative practices, strengthen existing practices, or improve organizational technical capacity.

Activity in the Small Grants program was greater in Year 4 than in previous years, the quality of proposals was generally better, and the proportion of rejections was smaller. These changes are attributable to the overall maturity of the TOPS program and its constituent parts (including networking), but also to modifications that TOPS made in Year 3 with the explicit aim of growing the Small Grants program:

- a) Increasing the ceiling for Micro Grants, from \$20,000 to \$50,000;
- b) Instigating a more flexible schedule for PIA submissions, proposal reviews and awards; and
- c) Allowing TOPS consortium members to apply for small grants by following the same procedures as all other applicants.

The grant-making process moved more quickly and smoothly than in Year 3, yet a handful of applicants had to withdraw their proposals because the implementation window within their own ongoing programs had closed. (See more information in the section on Program Management, below).

TOPS received 17 new Micro Grant proposals during Year 4 alone and processed a total of 24 proposals (including the seven received during the last quarter of Year 3). Of these, six proposals were rejected (one by USAID, five by TOPS). The remaining 19 applications were sent to USAID for approval. With the two proposals sent to USAID in the last quarter of Year 3, the total number pending for approval in Year 4 was 21. Of these, 16 were approved by USAID, one was rejected, and the remaining four were pending at the close of Year 4. TOPS signed awards with 15 applicants. One was unable to provide adequate award information, and TOPS cancelled the award.

Two highlights from Micro Grant activities in Year 4 are presented in **Figure 6**, below.

Figure 6: Highlighted examples from TOPS Micro Grant awards in Year 4	
Vulnerability Assessment, Mercy Corps January – July 2014	Commodity Management Echo Training, Food for the Hungry July – September 2014
<p>In Myanmar, Mercy Corps led the development of a <i>Dry Zone Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment</i> to assess the vulnerability of farming communities to variable and shifting environmental conditions, a disabling governance and policy environment, and inefficient agricultural markets. Using a new analytical tool it developed based on TANGO's 2012 <i>Enhancing Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Africa</i> discussion paper, Mercy Corps conducted background research and interviews, collected community-level data, and held a workshop to synthesize and analyze the data.</p> <p>Mercy Corps identified several capacities that, if appropriately strengthened, could increase the resilience of Dry Zone farming communities by increasing productivity and diversifying income while reducing vulnerability to shocks (such as drought, pest infestation, and plant disease) and long-term stresses such as land degradation and inflation.</p> <p>Upon completion of a final report and case study, Mercy Corps conducted a webinar to share findings. The ultimate output of this work is a draft set of theories of change which will inform the development of a new Dry Zone resilience strategy.</p>	<p>This extensive, five-day CM echo training addressed the lack of capacity in commodity programming and management in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Thirty-one staff attended from all five PVOs implementing FFP-funded II programs in DRC: Food for the Hungry, ADRA, World Vision, Mercy Corps, and CRS.</p> <p>The materials and modules typically used in TOPS CM training (including Handling and Mitigating Losses; Beneficiary Selection and Verification; and Food Monitoring) were contextualized by focusing on DRC-specific events and challenges. The French-language materials were hands-on, and the content relevant and engaging for the participants.</p> <p>Participants agreed to share their knowledge with colleagues who were not able to attend, and partners in DRC will continue to share information on how to manage challenges that affect the daily management of commodities. The French documents and training materials will be shared with the food security community shortly, after final review and validation by translators and CM experts in French.</p>

In the second quarter of Year 3, TOPS released its second RFA for PIAs that allows for applicants to submit proposals at any time but provides for four phases timed and staggered throughout the life of the TOPS Program for bundled review of the proposals. The first review phase for this second RFA occurred in Year 3, and is not discussed here. The remaining three phases occurred in Year 4. TOPS received a total of 25 concept papers and, after review, invited 16 applicants to submit a full proposal. Fifteen did so (an organization whose activities were to take place in Sudan dropped out due to the political situation in that country). After review, TOPS recommended ten of these proposals to USAID, which approved five and was reviewing three at the close of Year 4. Three awards were made by the end of the year.

Seven previously funded Small Grant activities (5 PIAs and 2 Micro Grants) were completed in Year 4, and grantees reported back to TOPS. A summary of all TOPS Small Grant activities is contained in **Attachment 3**. More detail on the five PIAs completed in Year 4 is also presented in **Table 4** below.

Table 4
Description of Completed Program Improvement Awards as of Year 4

PIA	Description
Information System for Management, Analysis, and Reporting Timeliness (I-SMART), ACDI/VOCA (February 2013 – January 2014)	ACDI/VOCA led development, testing, and refinement of the I-SMART system, a cost-effective information management system to support multi-sectoral program management and donor reporting. ACDI/VOCA created the infrastructure for the database which was vetted during an initial workshop with Washington, DC partners and implementers of development food assistance programs. Next, staff finalized the data collection tools and the database was tested in Sierra Leone through collaboration with ACDI/VOCA's field team. Following the test, and with feedback from ACDI/VOCA HQ staff, revisions were made before the final version was presented at a stakeholder meeting in Washington, DC. I-SMART will be effective in tracking beneficiaries and generating reports for various indicators. Based on the input and feedback received throughout the grant period, ACDI/VOCA has applied for additional funding from TOPS to (1) improve the database to incorporate more detail on beneficiary status as it relates to food distribution and align it with FFP systems and, (2) use expanded field testing in several countries to improve guidance on use.
Regional Agricultural Marketing Production of Super Gari, OIC International (January – December 2013)	Within the ongoing OICI Health, Agriculture, and Nutrition Development for Sustainability (HANDS) program in Liberia, this grant activity encouraged the use of a locally-produced, fortified food product called Super Gari as a means to meet populations' nutrition needs, to strengthen the capacity of Super Gari producers; and promote consumption and market expansion across Liberia. OICI educated stakeholders via meetings, workshops and trainings, and used media to increase awareness. Achievements included the training of 86 producers from two countries, the design and launch of a Super Gari web page to enhance visibility, and a robust awareness campaign that ran on Liberian national and local radio stations. Representatives from relevant government ministries expressed support for OICI's efforts to introduce Super Gari as a viable commercial and nutritious product. OICI recommended that any follow on should focus on scaling up engagement and production into the wider Liberian market.
Market Analysis and Response Kit (MARKit), CARE and CRS (January - December 2013)	The MARKit grant aimed to meet the food security practitioner community's needs to improve both market data collection practices and implementer data analysis capacity, so that donors and implementing agencies can effectively and proactively monitor dynamic markets, often in countries experiencing crisis. MARKit is designed to be a rigorous, field-friendly market analysis toolkit to facilitate decision making. It was developed, promoted and minimally tested by participants at a CRS workshop in Niger; this process provided insight that informed the working draft of the toolkit. But unforeseen challenges meant that the MARKit working draft was not tested in real-world settings and varying contexts. Using its own funds, CRS is committed to field test MARKit in two projects, make any needed modifications for a final toolkit, and coordinate with TOPS to disseminate and promote the completed toolkit to the broader humanitarian response and food security community by spring 2015.
Integration of the Care Group MCHN BCC Model with the GROW Social and Economic Development Model: Synergies in Food and Nutrition Security Programming, Project Concern International (May 2013 - April 2014)	PCI tested a framework for integrating two models in its ongoing programs: the Care Group MCHN BCC model and its own Grass Roots building Our Wealth (GROW) model that enables economically vulnerable women to marshal their own social and financial capital to improve their food and livelihood security, and address health and social concerns. The study used 30 intervention groups (Care Group +GROW) and 30 comparison groups (Care Group only) in Liberia. Intervention groups exceeded saving and lending targets, saw a higher percentage of participants accessing credit, and GROW group loans were used for income generation activities. The most significant changes perceived by PCI staff are linked to women's sense of self-efficacy, participation in community improvement, and increased sense of cooperation, support and trust among the GROW participants. PCI plans to integrate additional GROW and Care Groups in Liberia. With private funds, PCI is now working with the University of Notre Dame's Initiative for Global Development to test the GROW model in case-control studies in Guatemala and Ethiopia to explore poverty, gender equity and social capital.

PIA	Description
Diet Quality Survey, CRS (January - December 2013)	CRS developed the Dietary Diversity and Determinants Survey (DDDS) to improve the efficiency and quality of its development food assistance programming. Its Burundi office developed a digital data collection tool from a survey questionnaire, then refined the product with input from pilot-testing in CRS programs in Burkina Faso, Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, and Malawi. The DDDS can be adapted to collect a Dietary Diversity Score at the individual level and an indicator of food access at the household level, as well as capture data on determinants of dietary diversity. The use of a cloud-based platform enables greater access to near real-time data for responsive management decision-making and program adjustments. A Survey Guide and User's Manual was created to accompany the tool. After the grant period, CRS used the DDDS in Burundi to conduct a privately-funded situation analysis of women's dietary diversity and key determinants to develop an informed proposal with insights into women's dietary diversity and factors such as gender in household decision-making and land ownership, poverty, family size and exposure to nutrition training. In Spring 2014, Burundi staff gave a virtual presentation to all of CRS to share the final DDDS tool, user manual, and lessons learned.

PR3: Knowledge Application. Effective and appropriate traditional and non-traditional skill delivery approaches and systems/applications used.

The TOPS strategy for capacity strengthening begins with the core competencies defined for each technical or cross-cutting specialty area. TOPS overarching goal in capacity strengthening is to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to achieve or surpass these core competencies as a prerequisite to improving the quality and effectiveness of development food aid programming. TOPS facilitates or sponsors capacity strengthening workshops that are structured for easy replication, with participants in all instances provided at least a minimum of materials, such as slides and handouts, and in some cases full manuals or guides in hard or soft copy. For sustainability of technical training activities after the TOPS Program ends, all TOPS technical staff worked in Year 4 on drafting detailed Training of Trainer guides to accompany support materials after the life of the TOPS Program.

IPR 3.1: Capacity of food security practitioners strengthened through focused skill transfer.

Throughout Year 4, TOPS continued to devote resources to traditional approaches for capacity strengthening, notably sector-specific technical training workshops (**Table 5**). In all, 350 practitioners from 12 countries and three regions participated in TOPS capacity-strengthening events. The content of these events takes cues from the core competencies defined by the relevant specialty Task Force. For all events, TOPS administers pre- and post-tests—linked to core competencies—to guide capacity-strengthening content, evaluate capacity-strengthening quality, and help participants gauge their own progress.

Table 5
Year 4 Sector-Specific Technical Capacity-Strengthening Workshops

Dates	Topics	Location	Country / Agency / Specialty of Attendees	Number of Participants
ANRM (including agriculture-focused behavior change and gender)				
October 21-25, 2013	1. Drought cycle management 2. SBC in agriculture 3. Post-harvest management 4. Value chain finance and Savings/Credit Cooperatives 5. Cross-cutting gender	Kampala, Uganda	Participants, all based in Uganda, included 25 representatives of FFP-funded programming (ACDI/VOCA, Mercy Corps), 5 from other USAID-funded programming and 2 USAID staff.	Average 26 daily

Dates	Topics	Location	Country / Agency / Specialty of Attendees	Number of Participants
November 21-23, 2013	1. SBC in agriculture 2. Drought cycle management 3. Integration of agriculture and nutrition 4. Gender was incorporated throughout 1-3 above	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso	Participants were from ongoing or previously funded FFP projects in Burkina Faso, DRC, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, plus 1 technical backstop staff from FFP HQ. Organizations include CRS, ACIDI/VOCA, CRS, Mercy Corps, CARE, Land O’Lakes, World Vision, SNV, Food for the Hungry, OICI.	29
January 14-16, 2014	Drought Cycle Management	Kotido, Uganda	All participants were from Uganda; 26 were representatives of FFP-funded programming (ACDI/VOCA, Mercy Corps) and 3 were other stakeholders.	29
January 22-24, 2014	Permagarden methodology for home gardens	Kotido, Uganda	All participants were from Uganda; 36 were representatives of FFP-funded programming (ACDI/VOCA, Mercy Corps) and 3 were other stakeholders.	39
March 17-21, 2014	Designing for Behavior Change in Agriculture: How to Conduct a Barrier Analysis	Panajachel, Guatemala	Participants were from Guatemala and included 17 representatives of FFP-funded programming (CRS, Save the Children, Mercy Corps), 2 from other USAID funded programs and 1 non-USAID stakeholder.	20
May 19-23, 2014	Designing for Behavior Change in Agriculture: Incorporating Gender (Requested by Niger participants at the November workshop in Burkina Faso.)	Maradi, Niger	Participants, all of whom were based in Niger, included 16 representatives of FFP-funded programming (Save the Children, CRS, Africare, Mercy Corps, World Vision) and 4 other USAID stakeholders.	20
CM (including CM focused gender integration)				
October 7-11, 2013	Enhanced knowledge of / skills for handling and managing FFP commodities	Blantyre, Malawi	Southern & Central Africa: Participants were prime and partner staff of 10 FFP-funded projects in Burundi, DRC, Madagascar, Malawi and South Sudan.	24
February 24-28, 2014		Harare, Zimbabwe	New FFP-funded partners, including from the 2 prime PVOs and 3 partners.	24
June 23-25, 2014	Supervision and oversight of FFP-funded programming	Washington, DC	Participants were HQ staff of 9 PVOs responsible for implementing FFP-funded programming.	17
July 28-August 1, 2014	Enhanced knowledge of / skills for handling and managing FFP commodities	Nazareth, Ethiopia	Postponed. A national holiday (lunar-based) fell within the period of the workshop.	-
September 22-26, 2014		Dakar, Senegal	West Africa & Sahel Region. Postponed due to emergency response to Ebola crisis.	-
M&E				
January 20-24, 2014	1. Sampling techniques 2. Preparing data for analysis 3. Analyzing data 4. Making data meaningful 5. Communicating results	Kampala, Uganda	Participants were from FFP-funded and WFP programs in Anglophone Africa. Five were from Ethiopia (CRS, Food for the Hungry, WFP), 5 from Liberia (OICI, ACIDI/VOCA), 7 from Uganda (Mercy Corps, ACIDI/VOCA, World Vision), 2 from Kenya (WFP) and 1 from Zimbabwe (CNFA).	21
May 23-28, 2014	1. Sampling techniques 2. Preparing data for analysis 3. Analyzing data 4. Conducting complex analysis 5. Making data meaningful 6. Communicating results	Dhaka, Bangladesh	All participants were from FFP-funded projects in Bangladesh, including 30 from CARE (15 CARE staff and 15 partner staff), 12 from Save the Children and its 4 sub awardees, and 13 from ACIDI/VOCA and its 5 partners.	55

Dates	Topics	Location	Country / Agency / Specialty of Attendees	Number of Participants
July 2014	1. Annual monitoring data 2. Data quality assurance	Mutare, Zimbabwe	Cancelled. Delays in start-up of FFP-funded programs meant an absence of sufficient program data on which to base workshop content.	-
Nutrition & Food Technology				
November 21-23, 2013	1. Key concepts and regional data for malnutrition 2. Recommendations for optimal IYCF practices 3. Grandmother-inclusive approaches 4. Supportive supervision tools 5. Nutritional value of locally available fruits & vegetables	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso	Participants were from ongoing or previous FFP-funded projects in Burkina Faso, DRC, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania and Niger and local partners in Burkina Faso.	22
January 27-31, 2014	Follow-up to Year 3 Training of Trainers in use of modified portions of <i>TIPs for TOPS</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of results Preparation to present to stakeholders Co-facilitation of one-day stakeholder event 	Antananarivo, Madagascar	Health and Nutrition Coordinators from CRS (lead), ADRA, CARE, Land O'Lakes and local diocese partners of the FFP-funded SALOHI Project consortium, 8 NGOs, 2 representatives of the national Scaling Up Nutrition movement, 2 from the MOH, 1 from UNICEF, and the USAID FFP Officer.	34
February 4-7, 2014	Follow-up to Year 3 Training of Trainers in use of modified portions of the Trials of Improved Practices methodology - <i>TIPs for TOPS</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of results Preparation to present to stakeholders Co-facilitation of one-day stakeholder event 	Lilongwe, Malawi	Health and Nutrition Coordinators from CRS, (lead) and the 7 partners of the FFP-funded WALA Project consortium, 4 from the USAID/Malawi-funded Strengthening Services Delivery Integration project, 4 regional and 2 national MOH partners, 1 regional Ministry of Agriculture partner.	27
SBC				
Feb 3-7, 2014	Implementation of the Care Group Approach	Washington, DC	Participants were US-based plus 1 from UNICEF/Somalia. Seven represented FFP-funded PVOs, 4 were from other NGOs, and 6 were independent consultants. A FFP representative also attended.	18

New TOPS capacity-strengthening activities

Overlapping between Year 3 and Year 4, TOPS tested a strategy to provide TOT that would be followed by replication and fieldwork with support from a distance by TOPS. In June of Year 3, TOPS provided a traditional TOT workshop in Malawi for the FFP-funded WALA Project staff and other stakeholders (including one participant from the FFP-funded SALOHI Project in Madagascar) on use of the *TIPs for TOPS* methodology for improving some infant and young child feeding practices while also building field staff skills in listening-dialogue-negotiation. At the end of the TOT workshop, the seven consortium members of the WALA Project developed plans to replicate the training with their field staff and carry out field work using the methodology, while the SALOHI Project participant developed plans to first cascade the training to health and nutrition coordinators among the consortium partners who would then proceed with internal replication and fieldwork. The training replication took place early in Year 4 with frequent email contact and advice from the TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist, particularly for the consortium members of the SALOHI Project. The TOPS specialist then visited Madagascar and Malawi, spending 3-4 days to coach consortium leaders in analyzing the results and preparing presentations for stakeholders (Table 5).

This was followed by a one day stakeholder workshop (Table 8) led by TOPS and selected members of the SALOHI and WALA Projects.

The ANRM team conducted initial capacity-strengthening workshops in Uganda and in the follow-on workshop to the knowledge sharing event for Francophone Africa in Burkina Faso (including participants from Niger) that covered a broad range of topics but in limited detail. This introductory training was meant to stimulate interest in more in-depth training at country level and was followed by field-focused capacity-strengthening workshops tailored to specific projects in the countries of Uganda and Niger.

The CM team increased efforts to encourage training participants to replicate the commodity management workshops among other staff and partners. For example, with a Micro Grant from the TOPS Small Grants program (see IPR2.4 and Attachment 3 for more information), TOPS consortium partner Food for the Hungry organized a five-day replication (or ‘echo’) training of a TOPS CM training held previously in Blantyre, Malawi in October 2013 (Table 5). This echo training was held in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo (July – August 2014) and was the third echo training to take place in the wake of the TOPS CM Workshop in Malawi.

In the echo training concept, those who attend a TOPS CM workshop are required to replicate the training using participatory methodology based on adult learning principles, along with use of the CM curriculum covering the entire spectrum of the commodity supply chain, for PVO or sub-awardee staff in their home country who were not able to attend the TOPS workshop.⁹ The ability of the echo training in the DRC to provide direct instruction in French by peers, that is among facilitators and participants with similar roles and responsibilities working in similar contexts, made for a valuable learning experience for participants. Results of a satisfaction survey indicated that 96 percent of the 30 participants said the echo training achieved the objectives of improving their CM knowledge, the topics discussed were important to their work, and that participants would be able to use the skills on the job.

In Year 4, USAID and PVO stakeholders in Malawi and in Anglophone West Africa approached TOPS technical specialists and asked that they develop a workshop in which TOPS technical specialists in nutrition and ANRM would guide reflection on project strategies through a lens of technical guidance based on the specialists’ capacities. To that end:

- USAID Malawi has proposed a workshop early in Year 5 for the new development food assistance projects slated to begin in FY2015. The event will combine (a) reflection on the final evaluation results of the previous project and (b) discussion of the strengths and possible weaknesses or gaps in SBC strategies planned for the new projects. In Q4 of Year 4, the TOPS ANRM team and the Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist developed a draft agenda for this workshop and set its dates (December 3 to 5, 2014).
- The TOPS ANRM team and the Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist invested considerable effort in developing an agenda, with input from all stakeholders, for *Guided Reflection: Learning throughout the Project Cycle in Liberia and Sierra Leone*. The workshop was proposed for early October in Year 5, to capture lessons learned in the last year of the existing development food assistance projects, but has been cancelled due to the current health emergency in the two countries.

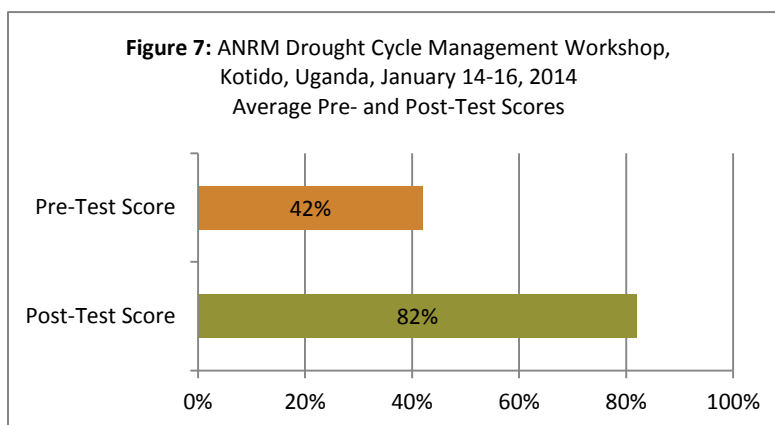
Pre- and Post-Tests and Satisfaction Surveys

TOPS continues to administer pre- and post-tests at each of its training events as a means of guiding training content and helping participants gauge their own progress. The TOPS Team also continued to use pre- and post-test results, satisfaction survey results, and informal conversation with workshop participants to continually improve the quality of training

At the May 2014 M&E training in Dhaka, simultaneous translation from English to Bangla was key to high scores found at post-test. More than 85 percent of participants scored 70 percent or above.

⁹ The TOPS CM’s ‘echo training’ is a type of cascade training following a Training of Trainers. The TOPS CM team provides material and guidance to those who give echo trainings back home, but does not explicitly train them as trainers.

provided. Information on results as a whole for the TOPS Program capacity-strengthening workshops can be found in **Attachment 2**, PMP. In Year 4, the CM team continued to schedule frequent capacity-strengthening workshop targeted particularly to countries with newly funded FFP projects. The ANRM team also increased the number of capacity-strengthening workshops provided in Year 4 and the pre- and post-test scores from an in-depth training held in Kotido, Uganda on January 14-16, 2014 are highlighted in **Figure 7** below.



The TOPS Team plans to continue these efforts to promote replication, attach fieldwork tasks to trainings, and provide technical assistance from a distance in Year 5.

PR4: Knowledge Sharing. Information, skill, and knowledge exchange supported and expanded.

The TOPS FSN Network is the primary mechanism through which TOPS engages with the food security and nutrition community. TOPS and FSN Network members are able to share best practices, while USAID, international organizations, and the academic and research communities have a venue in which to reach implementers with new policies, guidance and evidence. Network members have the opportunity to engage as deeply or lightly as they find suitable among the activities and levels available (**Figure 8**).¹⁰

Figure 8: Multiple levels and methods of engagement to suit diverse network membership

Levels of Engagement Low -----> High	Interest Group Leadership Circle	Task Force Co-Chair	Webinar/Meeting Presenter	Resource Library User
	Active Group Member	Active Task Force Member	Webinar/Meeting Participant	E Newsletter Subscriber
	Regular Group Member	Task Force ListServ Member	Discussion Event Participant	Social Media Follower
	Interest Groups	Task Forces	Events	Media

¹⁰ In Figure 8, the previously used term ‘discussion group’ was changed to ‘interest group’ to avoid confusion between discussion forums (where any member of the FSN Network can interact online) and the Interest Groups themselves, in which members interact in specific ways with other members of that group.

In Year 4, TOPS, led by the KM team, sought to enrich FSN Network member experiences by offering several new ways to interact within the community and FFP. First, TOPS facilitated consultations that afforded network members the opportunity to influence FFP policy. The community was invited to participate, in-person and virtually, in an open dialogue with FFP and to provide feedback/suggest new ideas for updating FFP's strategic plan and RFA process. Second, the *FSN Network News* e-newsletter was redesigned to encourage members to share their work and expertise by adding 'Featured Photo' and 'Featured Member' sections. Finally, upgrades to the FSN Network Web Portal allowed different content types to be shared. New content media, such as video, help to drive collaboration and knowledge exchange by creating new pathways for interaction among the community.

IPR 4.1: Physical and virtual community exchange forums and knowledge-sharing mechanisms supported and expanded.

The TOPS FSN Network

TOPS launched the FSN Network in February 2011, and it has grown to over 2,000 members representing all major stakeholders in the food security and nutrition community (**Table 6**). With an established community, the TOPS KM team shifted efforts in Year 4, from growing the FSN Network to strengthening the quality of the member experience.

Table 6
Organizations that Collaborated with TOPS and the FSN Network in Year 4

Type of Organization	Names of Organizations
Implementing Organizations	ACDI/VOCA, ADRA, Africare, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, CNFA, Concern Worldwide, Counterpart International, Food for the Hungry, Helen Keller International, International Medical Corps, JAM, Land O'Lakes, Lutheran World Relief, Mercy Corps, Nutrition and Education International, OIC International, PCI, Samaritan's Purse, Save the Children, World Vision (U.S. and International)
Globally Funded Projects /Organizations	FANTA, K4Health, PATH/MCSP, SPRING
U.S. Government	USAID Bureau of Food Security, USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (environment), USAID/DCHA/Food for Peace, USAID Global Health Bureau, USAID Office of Awards and Acquisition/Transportation
Academic and Research Institutions	Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute, <i>Comite Inter-Etate pour la Lutte contre la Secheresse au Sahel</i> (CILSS), Horticulture Innovation Lab at the University of California, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), <i>Institut de l'Environnement et Recherches Agricoles</i> (INERA), Johns Hopkins University, Nutrition Innovation Lab at Tufts University, Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine
International Organizations	Food and Agriculture Organisation, Pan American Health Organisation, UN High Commission on Refugees, World Food Programme
Other	AMEX, CORE Group Working Groups, John Snow, Inc. and the <i>Rebuilding Basic Health Services Project</i> in Liberia, The Grandmother Project, Veterinarians Without Borders Belgium, The Manoff Group with the <i>ENGINE Project</i> in Ethiopia

The TOPS FSN Network Task Forces

The seven FSN Network Task Forces are primary actors in the TOPS Program with leadership from the appropriate TOPS technical specialists. Members include staff of PVOs that implement USAID development food assistance projects and other stakeholders in the food security community. In Year 4, TOPS continued to host sector-specific Task Force meetings, along with joint Task Force meetings as relevant.

Joint Task Force Activities

The M&E Specialist, with the M&E Task Force, led joint activities to support FANTA with review of new performance indicator reference sheets (PIRS) at two distinct points in time during Year 4.

First, FANTA requested collaboration from the TOPS Gender Task Force, coordinated through the TOPS M&E Task Force, on reviewing the PIRS developed by FANTA for eight required baseline and final evaluation indicators newly added by FFP to measure gender integration in its development food assistance projects. The two Task Forces solicited feedback from their membership on the PIRS and then assembled all feedback received and sent it to FANTA for onward submission to FFP.

In Q4, the FANTA Project asked TOPS to distribute draft performance indicator reference sheets (PIRS) for ten existing FFP indicators to the ANRM, M&E and Nutrition & Food Technology Task Forces for review and comment. The process was coordinated through the M&E Specialist and M&E Task Force and was followed by a stakeholder meeting hosted by FANTA.

In Q4, this process was repeated with a similar request for assistance from the ANRM and the Nutrition & Food Technology Task Forces on additional indicators relevant to ANRM and to nutrition. TOPS consolidated comments and shared them with FANTA. These were further discussed by the PVO implementing community during a stakeholder meeting held by FANTA in collaboration with the TOPS KM Team (Table 9).

The ANRM Task Force and the Nutrition & Food Technology Task Force held a joint meeting in September 2014 during which members spent an afternoon reviewing key nutrition indicators

and discussing how agriculture projects can be oriented toward improving nutritional outcomes as measured by these indicators. FANTA presented technical information on the Household Dietary Diversity Score and on Minimum Dietary Diversity (for children 6 to 23 months) as part of the composite indicator, Minimum Acceptable Diet. In small groups, participants then explored practical links between agricultural activities and nutrition outcomes. The session closed with a discussion of a new global indicator for women's dietary quality with a focus on micronutrient adequacy, and how this indicator might affect projects that have been collecting data and reporting on women's nutrition. FANTA and several global stakeholders (including USAID, FAO, EU and FHI360) researched datasets, selected food groups, and defined cut-off points for the new *Minimum Dietary Diversity-Women* indicator.

Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Task Force

At the ANRM Task Force's first meeting in Year 4 (October 2013), members discussed the schedule for the rest of the year, with a decision made to meet every other month, and strategies for future group sustainability.

Two tools were endorsed by the ANRM Task Force in Year 4 (Table 1). At the December Task Force meeting, CRS gave a presentation on the *Five Skill Sets for Smallholder Farmers* tool. Task Force members subsequently endorsed the tool and it was shared with the food security community and USAID. During the final ANRM Task Force meeting of Year 4, Mercy Corps presented its *Private Sector Engagement Toolkit* for endorsement. Members unanimously endorsed the toolkit and announced it to the larger food security community at the end of September 2014).

At its February 2014 meeting, the ANRM Task Force reviewed its module for the comprehensive TOPS self-assessment toolkit, and discussed and developed concepts that should be suggested as a learning agenda for the TOPS Small Grants program. Members generated eight ideas in three groupings: (a) activities to integrate agriculture and nutrition, (b) research questions in ANRM, and (c) ways to reduce post-harvest losses. These ideas were submitted to the TOPS Small Grants team for future action.

The Task Force provided comments on the first two guides in the *TOPS ANRM Technical Guides* series—those covering farmer field schools and financial planning for farmers—in May, and these were integrated into the documents' final version (Table 2). This led into an in-person Task Force meeting at the *Sixth Knowledge Sharing*

Meeting in July. Ten Task Force members, including four from USAID, attended this meeting to discuss what technical topics are gaining traction in the food security community.

Note that ANRM Task Force members also attended the *TOPS Review of Promising Practices in FFP Development Food Assistance Projects: ANRM practices and cross-cutting gender practices* - hosted by TOPS in the first half of the year for the broader food security community (Table 8).

Commodity Management Task Force

CM Task Force members contributed to and reviewed the *Commodity Management Handbook* that was finalized, printed and distributed in Year 4 (it was also translated into French and Spanish). They were also involved in the development of the Warehouse Staff Safety Guide, the self-assessment tool for Commodity Managers, and core competencies of Warehouse Managers. CRS and World Vision have played particularly strong roles in TOPS CM work. They have not only facilitated sessions in CM capacity-strengthening workshops (Table 5), they are active in developing and reviewing various tools.

The **CM Life Cycle Process Mapping** meeting (Table 8) was organized so that participants could learn to map out process flows, from ordering commodity to distributing commodity to beneficiaries. Attendees defined tasks, controls, tools, etc. at the front end of the life cycle (in the U.S.) and at the back end of the cycle (in the recipient country). Participants were PVO HQ staff, PVO field staff and USAID staff. For the first time, representatives from USDA, commodity vendors and freight forwarders participated in a TOPS CM activity.

Gender Task Force

The focus of the Gender Task Force in Year 4 was to strengthen the capacities of key stakeholders (including representatives of USAID, implementers of FFP-funded programs, and other organizations and agencies that have made contributions to the Task Force) to further identify key gaps and opportunities for gender integration within FFP-funded programming. The Task Force also served as a platform for implementers to share their feedback with FFP about FY14 RFA guidance for gender integration, and the group contributed to finalizing the core competencies for development of the gender module of the *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit*, which was distributed in the last quarter of Year 4 (IPR 1.1).

In Year 4, Gender Task Force members also provided comprehensive feedback on the gender analysis process for development food assistance programs. At a Task Force meeting held during the *Sixth Knowledge Sharing Meeting* in Washington, DC (July 2014), members provided feedback on topics such as: developing the scope of work for the gender analysis consultant, budgeting for the analysis and activities resulting from the recommendations of the analysis, and overall guidelines for completing the analysis. An online survey was then created based on the questions asked and information obtained during the meeting. Meeting information and survey results were shared with FFP's gender point person; responses to the feedback and questions asked during the Washington, DC, meeting will be shared in Year 5.

Knowledge Management Task Force

The KM Task Force met in June after an eight month hiatus. A member of Insight Systems Corporation's Knowledge-Driven Agricultural Development Project (better known as KDAD) became the Task Force's first co-chair. The Task Force instituted a 'Building a Knowledge Management Culture in Your Organization' series in response to the implementation challenges that members experience in their organizations. The KM Task Force plans to break new ground in Year 5 by hosting training sessions/information sharing, and increasing a focus on endorsing and developing tools.

Monitoring & Evaluation Task Force

The M&E Task Force agreed to more frequent meetings, moving from a quarterly meeting plan to every other month (bimonthly) plan, with the Task Force meeting 5 times in Year 4. Members continued to provide important input into the development and modification of tools. As noted for the ANRM and the Nutrition & Food

Technology Task Forces, the M&E Task Force was instrumental in providing review, comment and consolidation of comments on new draft performance indicator reference sheets (PIRS) in collaboration with FANTA (see *Joint Task Force Activities*, above).

The Task Force has also become a venue for members to obtain new information and updates from the donor. The FFP M&E Advisor gave presentation to the Task Force on the *Theory of Change* methodology, on M&E budgeting guidelines, and on examples of lessons from the field of effective M&E systems. PVOs developing two tools with PIAs from the TOPS Small Grants program – the *I-SMART* tool and the *MARKit* tool (Attachment 3) have also presented drafts of these tools to the Task Force for comment (Table 8).

As a strategy for long-term sustainability, a staff from ACDI/VOCA was elected as co-chair by Task Force members. The co-chair will participate in drawing up meeting agendas, mobilizing the community to participate in Task Force activities, and following up on the work plan.

Nutrition and Food Technology Task Force

The Nutrition & Food Technology Task Force did not meet as an individual Task Force in Year 4. Instead, members participated in two specific knowledge-sharing events—*Meeting to Discuss the Programmatic Elements Within the Preventing Malnutrition in Children under 2 Approach (PM2A)* and *TOPS Review of Promising Practices in FFP Development Food Assistance Projects: MCHN practices and cross-cutting SBC*—hosted by TOPS in the first half of the year for the broader food security community (Table 8). Task Force members also reviewed draft PIRS, provided comment and participated in a stakeholder meeting held by FANTA, and participated in a joint meeting with the ANRM Task Force in Q4 (see *Joint Task Force Activities*, above).

Throughout the life of the TOPS Program, TOPS and the CORE Group Nutrition Working Group have maintained ongoing communication. TOPS participation in the latter’s planning session during the CORE Group Spring Meeting in Silver Spring, Maryland, generated ideas for collaboration in Year 5. Ideas were shared with the Task Force via email, and several members volunteered to collaborate on the development of tools in Year 5 on topics including the integration of (a) water, sanitation and hygiene activities into MCHN programming and (b) nutrition-sensitive agriculture into food security programming.

Social and Behavior Change Task Force

A group of volunteers from the SBC Task Force have been collaborating with the CORE Group SBC Working Group to develop the *Make Me a Change Agent! Toolkit* (Table 2). TOPS consortium partner Mercy Corps tested almost all of the available lessons with their staff in DRC; feedback from this effort contributed to refining the lessons.

Meanwhile, members of the SBC Task Force and the Care Group Forward Interest Group contributed to work on a new tool to fill gaps in previous training materials for Care Groups: *Care Groups: A Training Manual for Program Design and Implementation*. A draft manual has been printed and disseminated for additional field testing and input. Future ideas for collaboration between TOPS SBC Task Force and CORE Group SBC Working Group include SBC in post emergency settings, and SBC in promoting responsive parenting / early childhood development / stimulation activities.

As did the ANRM Task Force (in Year 4) and the Nutrition & Food Technology Task Force (at the end of Year 3), the SBC Task Force also developed a list of SBC challenge topics and provided these for potential emphasis through the TOPS Small Grants Program.

The TOPS FSN Network Web Portal

The TOPS FSN Network Web portal serves as a space for development practitioners—especially those working on FFP-funded activities—to access and share the latest resources, learn about upcoming events, participate in online

discussions with other implementers, and stay abreast of updates on food security and nutrition implementation. The Web portal was launched in 2012 with key features including:

- A **Resource Library** that serves as a document repository for over 500 tools and guides for implementers
- **Discussion Event** pages that host curated discussions grouped by technical area or cross-cutting topic
- **Interest Group** areas that function as a site within a site for small groups of practitioners who want to dig deeper on specific topics of interest
- **Task Force** areas that function as sub-sites and spaces for collaboration

Several upgrades were implemented to the Web portal in Year 4, driven by feedback from FSN Network Task Force members, fresh perspectives on the site from new TOPS staff, and input from technology experts (Web developers and a design expert). Major changes made in Year 4 were to:

- Add video images and links to the Knowledge Sharing Meeting pages as a way to offer more visual and interactive assets to the site (early 2014)
- For the home page, create new slider images that link to featured content on the site (early 2014)
- Convert information about TOPS and the TOPS Small Grants Program from document files to Web pages (early 2014)
- Create a consolidated discussion forums page for discussion events and discussion groups with an easier interface and flexibility around creating forums on new topics (May 2014)
- Make public the Task Force pages at the behest of Task Force chairs; give Task Force and Interest Groups pages a landing page with more detailed information and relevant links (May 2014)
- Add faceted search to the resource library (August 2014)
- Cross-link the FSN Network Web portal to the new TOPS website (August 2014)
- Update the design of the homepage (September 2014)
- Modify the top navigation menu of the website to streamline navigation (September 2014)

Besides guidance for submitting small grant proposals to TOPS, the following are among the top ten documents most often downloaded from the FSN Network web portal in Year 4:

- *A Practical Guide for Building a Simple Pit Latrine*, the Global Water Initiative
- *Review of Promising Practices in FFP Development Food Assistance Project*, TOPS
- *Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning in Emergencies*, CRS
- *Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition Toolkit*, FANTA
- *A Practical Guide to Conducting a Barrier Analysis*, Bonnie Kittle
- *Care Groups: A Training Manual for Program Design and Implementation*, TOPS
- *Nutrition-sensitive Agriculture for Agriculture Development Agents: Participant Manual*, Save the Children
- *Introducing Knowledge Sharing Methods and Tools: A Facilitator's Guide*, International Development Research Centre

The biggest change to the Web portal in Year 4 was upgrading the content management system to a newer version (August 2014). It is necessary to upgrade the Web platform periodically because, as new versions of the content management system are released, the penultimate version becomes obsolete. Since an upcoming version of the content management system is likely to be released sometime within Year 5, the TOPS Team determined that the end of Year 4 would be the optimal moment to upgrade the platform to ensure that the portal continues to receive security updates into the foreseeable future.

Online discussions

In Year 4, TOPS saw a new trend in online discussion events: requests from USAID to host discussions in order to solicit input and feedback from the implementer community on a range of key issues (**Table 7**). The TOPS Program hosted three online discussions during Q2 to foster conversation around methods for 'greening' food assistance projects. The discussions solicited information and insights from development practitioners on

their use and monitoring of environmental safeguards in development food assistance programs. Key collaborators were TOPS specialists for Gender and members of the KM team, along with the Post-Crisis Environmental Advisor of USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. Fifteen people participated in the three discussions, including regional technical advisors, consultants, and program management leads.

The TOPS Program hosted two online discussions (for a total of 10 discussion threads) from June to September 2014 to garner stakeholder feedback on questions posed by FFP as part of the consultative process around updating the FFP Strategic Plan. Fifteen people participated, including regional and HQ staff, and one who consolidated feedback from the several members of InterAction. Finally, TOPS hosted an online discussion on the changes that FFP was proposing to the FY16 RFA, which had three participants.

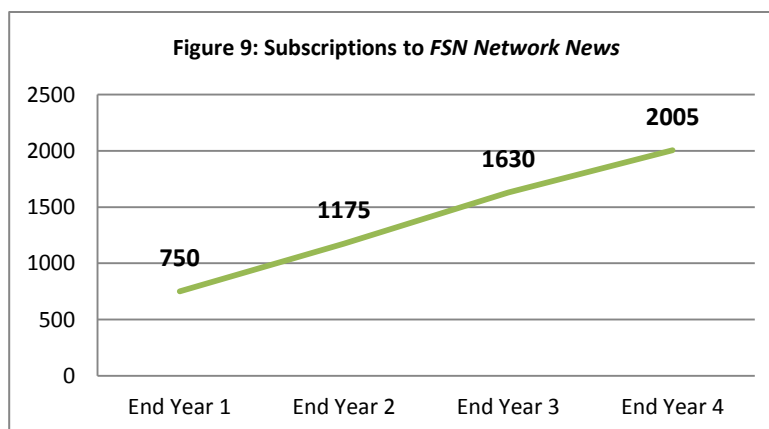
As TOPS takes on more requests from USAID and other stakeholders to host online discussions to solicit feedback and input from the implementer community, the TOPS KM team is gaining valuable knowledge on how to design, sequence, and conduct outreach to maximize participation, and on how to judge when online discussions are appropriate and when they are not.

Table 7
TOPS-Hosted Online Discussions

Discussion Event	Dates	Number of Comments	TOPS Discussant
Technologies and Approaches in Developing Environmental Safeguards for development food assistance programs	Jan 27-Feb 7	15	ANRM Specialist
Staffing for Environmental Management for development food assistance programs	Feb 10-21	8	KM Specialist
Monitoring and Evaluation of Environmental Safeguards for development food assistance programs	Feb 24-Mar 7	2	M&E Specialist
Emerging Issues to Be Addressed in the FFP Strategy Update	Jun 5 – 26	13	KM Specialist
Online Consultation on FFP Strategy Update : Nine Questions	Aug 20 – Sep 5	20	KM Specialist
Proposed Changes to FY2016 RFA for development food assistance programs	Sep 8 – 23	5	KM Specialist

The Biweekly FSN Network E-Newsletter

In Year 1, the KM team launched *FSN Network News*, a biweekly e-newsletter that is the primary mechanism for disseminating information to and between members of the FSN Network. Subscriptions to *FSN Network News* have grown steadily and significantly (**Figure 9**), fueled by more prominent placement of the newsletter signup form on the FSN Network website, increased promotion of the newsletter at Knowledge Sharing Meetings, increased word-of-mouth marketing following a full redesign of the newsletter, and increased personal outreach by the TOPS Team.



Members of the FSN Network are encouraged to submit event announcements, resources, job announcements and other news to the KM team for inclusion in the newsletter. The newsletter features announcements from USAID and TOPS that are highly relevant to the food security community, notifications of FSN Network-sponsored events and Task Force meetings, and selected resources useful to implementers of FFP-funded programming. It also contains a selection of events, tools, online discussions, academic articles, policy briefs, and news stories.

In Year 4, the KM team switched to a different email distribution service to create and send out the newsletter. The latter offers more customization in design and better reporting. Along with this switch, the team completely redesigned the newsletter to make relevant information easier to find and to enhance the aesthetics. The two-column design was eliminated in favor of a sleek single column that makes scrolling and browsing easier. A newly designed header image draws readers in, as does a 'Featured Photo' as the first item: these make the newsletter more visually interesting and increase engagement, as all organizations are encouraged to submit photos. The newsletter now has a Table of Contents at the top, which allows subscribers one-click navigation to the segments in which they are most interested.

Other updates include a 'Featured Member of the FSN Network' section, with an interview with a key member of the network community, and a 'Calls for Input' section, which features requests from other organizations for feedback and ideas. As the newsletter has grown in its subscriber base and reputation, it has also become the main vehicle for FFP to share important updates with its audience. The newsletter continues to highlight these updates prominently.

Over the course of Year 4, the KM team e-published 61 issues of *FSN Network News*: 26 regular and 35 special editions (more than double the special editions from Year 3). *FSN Network News* has been a useful push mechanism for driving traffic to the Web Portal. In Year 5, the KM team will analyze open rates and click data for the newsletters, and survey subscribers, to determine which content is most useful and how to better serve readers while continuing to drive traffic to the FSN Network website.

TOPS FSN Network Knowledge Sharing Events

TOPS FSN Network knowledge-sharing events bring together food security and nutrition partners, donors, and researchers for peer learning, knowledge sharing, and networking. TOPS established a model for these events that combines knowledge exchange, participatory learning activities and small group discussions to stimulate cross-organizational collaboration. Knowledge sharing events provide an opportunity for partners and FFP to share information in a participatory setting.

The semi-annual TOPS FSN Network *Knowledge Sharing Meetings* have been a flagship event for the TOPS Program since its inception. Meetings are designed around topics that the FSN Network community and other stakeholders identify as timely and relevant to the current state of food security and nutrition programming and implementation. Each TOPS technical specialist plays a vital role, shaping a global learning agenda and ensuring the technical legitimacy and applicability of the content presented. For topic areas beyond the scope of the TOPS technical specialists, the KM team seeks the engagement of FSN Network champions. CRS, CARE, World Vision, and many others that are not partners in the TOPS consortium, have contributed a great deal to the TOPS knowledge-sharing events.

In Year 4, TOPS began to provide KM expertise to support, organize and facilitate a new category of TOPS activity - *Knowledge Summits* - which are conceived as narrower in scope than *Knowledge Sharing Meetings*: they concentrate on a particular geographic area, focus on one topic, are invitation-only and are specifically designed to maximize dialogue and exchange between FFP and partners. More information on this first experience with the *USAID Zimbabwe Knowledge Summit-Lessons Learned* is provided below. TOPS also initiated planning in Year 4 for activities scheduled for Year 5 with Malawi and Anglophone West Africa that are being referred to as *Guided Reflection* and which are organized and led by the relevant TOPS technical specialists, with advice from the KM team (see more in section PR3, Knowledge Application).

The TOPS KM team organized, expedited and facilitated four important learning events in Year 4, summarized below. Each event received positive feedback from attendees, presenters and USAID. The variety of topics covered, the participatory techniques (especially small group work and large group discussion) used to engage participants, the opportunities to interact and exchange ideas with USAID, and the chance to expand attendees' learning network of implementers were all cited as reasons for the success and usefulness of TOPS learning events.

Fifth Knowledge Sharing Meeting: Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, November 18-20, 2013

TOPS FSN Network's *Fifth Knowledge Sharing Meeting for Francophone Africa* was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in Q1 of Year 4. TOPS reached a milestone by conducting the event in French to meet the needs of the Francophone food security and nutrition community. The meeting brought together 136 participants from 17 countries and 39 organizations. Participants represented implementers, donors and researchers.

Twenty concurrent knowledge-sharing sessions highlighted technical and cross-cutting topics identified by the FSN Network through surveys and interviews. Resilience was a key cross-cutting theme. The opening session *Resilience in Action* outlined a conceptual framework for resilience, key characteristics of resilience programming, and promising practices for building resilience within the context of drought and chronic food insecurity. Ensuing, concurrent sessions invited participants into a deeper exploration of resilience topics including measuring resilience and how to use early warning systems.

USAID Sahel Regional Bureau Resilience Workshop: Niamey, Niger, March 17-21, 2014

With the first Associate Award to the TOPS Program (see more in the section on Program Management, below), the TOPS KM team helped organize and provided onsite assistance to the USAID Sahel Region Bureau Resilience Workshop in Niamey, Niger. The five-day workshop attracted nearly 130 participants from USAID, the governments of Niger and Burkina Faso, international and national NGOs, and the donor community.

The first three days were for USAID staff and implementing partners. Attendees studied the new USAID Resilience Strategy framework, debated questions on implementation approach, and devised schematics that helped represent what a resilient community looks like. The final two days were conducted in French. External stakeholders joined and were introduced to the integrated package of new investment programs for reinforcing resilience. Their feedback was incorporated, and participants took steps to build relationships and achieve stakeholder buy-in on improved coordination and collaboration mechanisms.

Sixth Knowledge Sharing Meeting: Washington, DC, July 10-11, 2014

The TOPS FSN Network's *Sixth Knowledge Sharing Meeting: Learn, Adapt, Apply* was held in Washington, DC, and brought together 193 implementers, donors and researchers working in food security and nutrition from 10 countries and 60 organizations. Each day of the meeting began with a plenary session that was recorded and broadcast for online participation. The major themes of the meeting were knowledge management (*learn*), resilience (*adapt*) and the latest technical innovations from the field (*apply*). Eighteen concurrent sessions highlighted these themes by showcasing numerous topics identified by the FSN Network community (via a pre-meeting survey and interviews) as integral to the execution of daily and long term assignments.

One goal of the meeting was to increase the knowledge and capacity of the implementing community through a series of skills-building sessions that were designed to help bridge the gap between FFP expectations of partner work products and the partners' perception of what FFP wanted in work products. These sessions were highly participatory, as attendees went through a series of exercises to produce sample work products.

**Highlight from the
*Sixth Knowledge Sharing Meeting***

One of the plenary sessions on July 11 was led by the Division Chief of the Policy and Technical Division of FFP. Participants convened in small groups to discuss nine questions and offer their input to updating the FFP Strategic Plan. Each small group was asked to share one idea with the larger group. All responses were captured on flip charts and these inputs are one of the first activities that will be part of an on-going process in Year 5 to contribute to the FFP Strategic Plan.

USAID Zimbabwe Knowledge Summit - Lessons Learned: Harare, Zimbabwe, August 19-21, 2014

The TOPS KM team designed, organized and provided onsite support for the *USAID Zimbabwe Knowledge Summit: Lessons Learned* in Harare, Zimbabwe. The overall purpose of the knowledge summit was to strengthen the impact

of food security programming in Zimbabwe through stakeholder learning and planning. Fifty-eight people attended, including officials from the Zimbabwe government, multilateral stakeholders, donors and partners.

The summit's first two days provided participants with a foundation for the concept of lessons learned. Participants worked in small groups to identify and write lessons learned. Between small group sessions, attendees had ample time to share findings with the larger group and discuss in-depth the formulation and application of lessons learned. The president of TANGO International facilitated a session on resilience within a Theory of Change framework which afforded attendees the opportunity to re-examine lessons learned in the context of resilience.

The third day of the knowledge summit was limited to staff from the ENSURE project (led by World Vision and partners) and the Amalima project (led by CNFA and partners). Participants used what they learned during the first two days to create action plans. USAID and project representatives discussed these plans at length to reach consensus on how to move forward without repeating mistakes of the past.

Support for Periodic Knowledge Sharing Events

The TOPS Team of technical specialists, with support from members of the FSN Network, can flexibly respond to stakeholder interests and hold periodic knowledge-sharing meetings in Washington, DC, as summarized in **Table 8**. TOPS considers these periodic events as strong contributors to FFP and the food security community in the quest for excellence in development food assistance programming. Notably, many of these events were coordinated with little advance notice, and TOPS staff adjusted planned activities to meet stakeholder needs. The frequency of these periodic events began to rise in Year 3 and continued during Year 4.

Table 8
FSN Network Special Topic Stakeholder Meetings in Year 4

Event	Location	Duration	Dates	Attendees	Co-Sponsors
ANRM					
<i>TOPS Review of Promising Practices in FFP Development Food Assistance Projects: ANRM practices and cross-cutting gender</i>	One Washington Circle Hotel, Washington, DC	1 day	Dec 6, 2014	28 participants from 23 organizations, including FFP staff	n/a
NALAN Interest Group webinar and discussion: <i>Integrating Gender and Social and Behavioral Change into Ag-Nutrition Programs</i>	Online	1.5 hours	Dec 11, 2013	20 participants from approximately 14 organizations	n/a
Presentation on the permagarden approach for home gardens	Washington, D.C	½ day	Jul 8, 2014	14 from 12 organizations	n/a
Moderated webinar: Lessons from a Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment in Myanmar's Dry Zone	Online	1 hour	Aug 20, 2014	15 (approximate) ¹¹	n/a
<i>Integrating Very Poor Producers into Value Chains Field Guide</i>	Washington, DC	1 day	Aug 28, 2014	21 participants from 10 organizations	n/a

¹¹ Note that online events retain registration lists but actual participants do not sign-in; TOPS is looking at ways to better document actual participants.

CM					
Commodity Tracking System presentations	USAID Learning Center, Crystal City, Virginia	2 days	Mar 18-19, 2014	13 participants from 8 organizations	n/a
CM Life Cycle Process Mapping	FHI360 Conference Room, Washington, DC	8 days	May 20-23 and May 27-30, 2014	27 participants from 12 organizations (USAID, USDA, private sector, PVO)	n/a
Gender					
Presentation and discussion of <i>Integrating Gender throughout a Project's Life Cycle: a guidance document for international development organizations and practitioners</i> , Land O'Lakes International Development, 2013	Save the Children, Washington, DC	1.5 hours	Dec 11, 2013	Almost 40 participants from more than 20 organizations, including FFP and USAID's Bureau of Food Security	Land O'Lakes International Development
M&E					
Orientation to the I-SMART tool, funded by TOPS PIA grant	Save the Children, Washington, DC	3 hours	Feb 27, 2014	8 participants from 7 organizations	ACDI/VOCA
Orientation to the MARKit tool, funded by TOPS PIA grant	Online	1 hour	Jan 29, 2014	11 participants from 4 organizations	CARE and CRS
Nutrition & Food Technology					
Meeting to Discuss the Programmatic Elements Within the PM2A Approach	Save the Children, Washington, DC	8 hours	Oct 11, 2013	30 participants from 18 organizations	CRS Burundi field staff and Mercy Corps Guatemala field staff leading implementation of PM2A projects
<i>TOPS Review of Promising Practices in FFP Development Food Assistance Projects: MCHN practices and cross-cutting SBC</i>	One Washington Circle Hotel, Washington, DC	1 day	Dec 5, 2013	27 participants from 21 organizations, including FFP staff	n/a
Stakeholder workshop for presentation of the <i>TIPs for TOPS</i> fieldwork process and results	Antananarivo, Madagascar	6 hours	Jan 30, 2014	34 participants from 15 organizations (including FFP)	FFP-funded SALOHI Project, CRS-led consortium
Stakeholder workshop for presentation of the <i>TIPs for TOPS</i> fieldwork process and results	Lilongwe, Malawi	6 hours	Feb 7, 2014	24 participants from 12 organizations (including national, sub-national MOH)	FFP-funded WALA Project, CRS-led consortium
Overview of The Grandmother Project strategies, approaches and results	Washington, DC	2 hours	Apr 14, 2014	30 participants from 27 organizations	The Grandmother Project
Additional Topics					
<i>Measuring Community Resilience</i>	Washington, DC	1 day	December 11, 2013	40 participants from 21 organizations	Plan International provided the locale
FFP RFA consultation	Washington, DC	2 hours	August 7, 2014	28 participants from 11 organizations	Hosted by USAID/FFP

TOPS is also frequently invited to participate in events hosted by other actors in the food security community, as shown in **Table 9**. Participation may take the form of making presentations, contributing to panel discussions, or designing and facilitating topic-specific sessions.

Table 9
TOPS Contributions to Events Hosted by Others in Year 4

Event	Date(s) and Location	Session Topic	TOPS contribution	Attendees to Session ¹²
AKLDP Project Workshop: <i>Kitchen Gardens for Improved Income and Nutrition</i>	July 1, 2014; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Presentations on keyhole, permagarden, and other approaches to home gardens	TOPS ANRM co-facilitation of sessions with project staff from Agriculture, Knowledge, Learning, Documentation and Policy Project of Tufts University, funded by USAID.	37
USAID Multisectoral Anemia Meeting	Oct 18, 2013; FHI360, Washington, DC	Multiple stakeholder presentations on anemia	Co-facilitation of small working group	approximately 60
Agrilinks, USAID Feed the Future	October 17-18, 2013	Recorded video for webinar access on resilience	Presentation by the president of TANGO International	(unknown)
Annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association	October 16, 2013; Washington, DC	Measurement of a resilience framework	Presentation by the president of TANGO International	40
FFP Global Meeting	March 2014; Waterview Conference Center, Arlington, VA	<i>Measuring Resilience</i>	Presentation by the president of TANGO International	150
	March 12, 2014; Waterview Conference Center, Arlington, VA	<i>TOPS Review of Promising Practices in FFP Development Food Assistance Projects</i> – ANRM practices, MCHN practices, and cross-cutting gender or SBC practices	Presentation by ANRM team and the Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist	15
		Findings from TOPS CM capacity-strengthening workshops and from Office of Inspector General audits & reviews	Presentation by CM Specialist	13
<i>Women's Empowerment and Men's Engagement</i>	3 part webinar series hosted by SPRING with TOPS collaboration (particularly on March 26, 2014)	<i>Part 1: Empowering Women in Agriculture: Maximizing Nutritional Gain</i>	TOPS Gender Specialist assisted in organizing the webinar series and participated in online discussion for Part 1	(a total of 647 participants from 69 countries registered for the series of webinars)
Addressing Gender and Assets in Agricultural Development Projects	May 8, 2014, IFPRI, Washington, DC	Presentations on the conceptual framework and key messages for practice and policy, and a draft guide for practitioners' and policymakers	TOPS Gender Specialist provided verbal feedback during the afternoon session and written feedback on the draft guide itself.	unknown

¹² Note that attendees at events hosted by others are NOT counted in the TOPS PMP indicators for PR4 Knowledge Sharing.

Event	Date(s) and Location	Session Topic	TOPS contribution	Attendees to Session ¹³
CORE Group Spring Meeting	May 8, 2014, Silver Spring, MD	Presentation on the <i>Effectiveness of Care Groups and Interpersonal Approaches: Evidence and a Resource</i>	TOPS SBC Specialist was on a panel for discussion.	Approximately 125
Care Group Technical Advisory Group Meeting hosted by CORE (with TOPS funding)	May 29-30, 2014, Washington, DC	Care Groups resources	TOPS SBC Specialist presented information about the manual: <i>Care Groups: A training manual for program design and implementation</i> .	Approximately 20
FANTA Project	June 19, 2014, teleconference	Teleconference with M&E staff of new development food assistance project awards in Uganda and Zimbabwe to discuss challenges faced with annual monitoring indicators	TOPS M&E Specialist and KM Specialist assisted in planning and organizing outreach and discussion during teleconference.	6 (2 from Uganda and 4 from Zimbabwe)
	June 30, 2014; teleconference	Teleconference with M&E staff of new development food assistance project awards in Niger to discuss challenges faced with annual monitoring indicators	TOPS M&E Specialist and KM Specialist assisted in planning and organizing outreach and discussion during teleconference.	6
USAID Climate Change Meeting	July, 2014	<i>Measuring Resilience</i>	Presentation by the president of TANGO International	(not reported)
Consultative meeting on PIRS by the FANTA Project	Aug 11, 2014; FHI360, Washington, DC	Review of PVO comments gathered through TOPS and further discussion of the performance indicator reference sheets (PIRS)	TOPS gathered PVO comments prior to the event; KM team facilitated remote participation during event	Approximately 15-20

TOPS Participation in relevant, existing food security-related networks and events

Members of the TOPS Team participate in multiple food security-related networks of global importance. Those of particular note in Year 4 included:

- *Food Aid Consultative Group*: TOPS Program Director, TOPS CM team, and the Director of Food Security for TOPS partner Mercy Corps are active participants in this group's activities.
- *Society for International Development-Washington DC Food Security and Agriculture Working Group*: TOPS ANRM team collaborates as members of this working group.
- *Food Security Information Network Technical Working Group on Measuring Resilience*: The president of TOPS partner TANGO International is a key expert participating in this group.
- *USAID Global Health Bureau Nutrition Unit Anemia Task Force*: TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist joined this newly formed Task Force in Year 3; in Year 4 she commented upon draft documents and attended one Task Force meeting in November 2013, along with the event noted in Table 9. No other Anemia Task Force activities took place in Year 4.
- *Ag2nut group*: TOPS ANRM team and the Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist participate in this group's monthly phone meetings and share information throughout the TOPS Team, non-TOPS partner staff and other stakeholders within the Task Forces.

¹³ Note that attendees at events hosted by others are NOT counted in the TOPS PMP indicators for PR4 Knowledge Sharing.

- *Consultative Groups:* TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist participated in the consultative groups for the development of the USAID Nutrition Strategy, attending multiple meetings for USAID partners and for civil society input.
- *Global Nutrition Cluster and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee:* The TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist coordinates with Save the Children Emergency Health and Nutrition staff for updates on these groups' activities.
- *Relevant CORE Working Groups:* TOPS Nutrition & Food Technology Specialist and TOPS SBC Specialist continued close coordination with the CORE Nutrition Working Group and the SBC Working Group.

Members of TOPS also regularly attend events hosted by key food security and nutrition entities, such as the International Food Policy Research Institute, the Secure Nutrition knowledge platform for the World Bank or the Agrilinks knowledge management initiative for USAID Feed the Future.

IPR 4.2: Local and regional knowledge sharing and networking strengthened.

Foster Field-Level Networking

Engaging the food security and nutrition community at the field level is a top priority for TOPS. Over four years, TOPS has leveraged the FSN Network as the primary means to promote knowledge sharing at the field level. Several collaborative techniques and platforms provide field level implementers the opportunity to learn from each other and interact with local FFP staff.

Methods to foster dialogue at the field level have evolved over TOPS lifespan. Knowledge sharing events, trainings and workshops are conducted in-country to bring implementers together to discuss emerging issues, challenges and ways forward with local FFP staff. The FSN Network Web Portal is home to numerous discussion and interest groups, and allows community members to collaborate and exchange knowledge on their own schedule, thus overcoming barriers of time differences and geographic dispersion.

Year 5 will be a time of exploration for TOPS, and the KM team in particular, as it moves beyond established engagement practices to try new ways to enhance the collaborative experience for members of the FSN Network.

Strengthen the TOPS FSN Network Interest Groups

Interest Groups of the FSN Network are cohorts of food security and nutrition implementers in dialogue with one another, virtually or in person, to share experiences on cross-cutting or emerging issues and improve their knowledge and practice in the interest area. These *de facto* 'communities of practice' help development practitioners break down the geographical, institutional and programmatic silos that divide them and learn from one another. Most Interest Groups (**Table 10**) were initially formed at a TOPS or FSN Network event, but these groups underwent a significant transformation when they were transitioned to the FSN Network Portal in Years 2 and 3. Other FSN Network members who were registered with the Web portal began to join the Interest Groups in droves: membership increased by factors of five and even ten. Yet these online Interest Groups lacked, among other things, the leadership required to create cohesion and maintain momentum.

In an effort to reinvigorate the groups, the TOPS KM team took a new, 'communities of practice' approach featuring low levels of activity in Year 4, starting with the Nutrition and Agriculture Linkages in Africa Network (NALAN). This began by surveying the group to better understand members' needs and interests, then inviting a contingent of core members to form a leadership circle. The KM Specialist worked with the leadership circle to plan events and build momentum, in the hope that members would eventually take on leadership themselves. In spite of initial successes in planning and implementing a Web event on *Integrating Gender and Social and*

Behavioral Change into Ag-Nutrition Programs in December 2013, the broader membership did not participate actively and the leadership circle dissolved in early 2014 as members dropped out or declined to lead the group citing busy work schedules. NALAN participation and activities returned to low levels in recent months.

Although the effort to foster leadership for some Interest Groups (NALAN, African Monitoring and Evaluation [AME], Réseau Intersectoriel pour le Changement de Comportement en Afrique Francophone [RICCAF], Designing for Behavior Change [DBC]) has not succeeded to date, those Interest Groups with strong leadership have seen much higher levels of activity. The Program Level Early Warning group (formerly Early Warning Systems group) was relaunched in Year 4 under the leadership of a FANTA member, held two in-person meetings, and is planning new meetings for Year 5 with participation at field and HQ levels. The Care Groups Forward Interest Group has been active under the leadership of the TOPS SBC Specialist. A new Interest Group on livestock is emerging under the leadership of a staff from Mercy Corps. The TOPS KM Specialist has focused on coaching, advising and supporting these leaders to help them build momentum and gain confidence as they deepen engagement with their groups.

Table 10
Status of FSN Network Interest Groups in Year 4

Group	Where Formed	Status
DBC	DBC regional training workshop, Silver Spring, MD, March 2012	Low activity
RICCAF	DBC regional training workshops for Francophone Africa, Niger, September 2011 and Burundi, February 2012	Inactive
Livestock Community of Practice	FSN Network Knowledge Sharing Meeting in DC, July 2014	Active
NALAN	DBC regional training workshop, Ethiopia, January 2012	Low activity
AME	M&E training for Anglophone West Africa, Liberia, February 2012	Inactive
Care Groups Forward	Second Knowledge Sharing Event, Mozambique, September 2011	Active
Program-Level Early Warning)		Active

Program Management

Overview

In Year 4, TOPS continued to strengthen and deliver on its primary programming components, including a variety of knowledge-sharing and learning events and other activities of the FSN Network, plus the subject-specific technical trainings held in country or regional settings for field implementers. In addition, TOPS provided technical assistance at the request of implementing partners, and the donor or its Missions, on subjects of specific interest or need, such as CM and resilience programming.

In Year 3, the TOPS mid-term evaluation recommended several actions to strengthen the program to achieve even better service. A priority for Year 4 was to implement those key recommendations (below). TOPS will prepare a report on its response to the mid-term evaluation and recommendations, to be issued early in Year 5.

Of special note, TOPS received its first Associate Award in Year 4. USAID/Sahel issued an Associate Award to TOPS to design and facilitate a launch workshop, to be attended by the implementing partners and USAID, for the two new regional resilience awards: Resilience and Economic Growth in The Sahel-Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER) and REGIS-Accelerated Growth (REGIS-AG) in Niger and Burkina Faso. The workshop took place in Niger.

Small Grants Program

The TOPS Small Grants Program took off in Year 4. Greater familiarity with TOPS and the grants application procedures appeared to help applicants navigate the program better. There were more applications from a wider variety of PVOs and less need for assistance in the application process. Strengthened and streamlined review procedures by TOPS and by USAID/FFP also expedited approvals and awards. Vital to this was the appointment of point persons within both TOPS and FFP to facilitate the internal review and approval processes.

TOPS promoted the Small Grants program through announcements in the FSN Network e-newsletter, at Task Force meetings, in all training and learning/knowledge-sharing events, at joint TOPS-PVO-FFP consultations, and at Program Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings.

TOPS remains concerned that proposal quality is not uniformly high. The mid-term evaluation recommended that the TOPS Team provide (limited) technical advice to applicants to improve their proposals. For Micro Grants, TOPS introduced a “Comments” section in the proposal review document, and reviewer comments are compiled and sent to applicants. If appropriate, TOPS technical specialists advise applicants on ways to improve their project design or direct them to further assistance on technical content, activity design, beneficiary targeting, budget preparation, and wider partner participation. For PIAs, TOPS inserted a section of “Recommendations when preparing full proposal” into the review process for concept notes for PIA. Reviewers’ recommendations are sent to organizations whose concepts are accepted and that are invited by TOPS to develop a full proposal.

In Year 4, TOPS introduced the ‘challenge RFA’ concept to raise topics of special interest and seek proposals that respond to those topics. Late in Year 3, TOPS issued a request—or precursor ‘challenge RFA’—to the member PVOs of the TOPS CM Task Force, asking for small grant proposals to fund several topics of special interest, including the development of a warehouse safety guide for PVOs that manage commodities as part of their programming and/or ‘echo’ replication of commodity management training workshops. Project Concern International and Food for the Hungry responded to these challenges. (See IPR2.4 for more information.)

An important lesson that TOPS learned in Year 4 was the value of assigning specific point persons, within both TOPS and FFP, to the Small Grants review process. TOPS and FFP technical staff have full agendas with their existing workload. The point persons reduced the time demands on the TOPS reviewers, summarized and forwarded reviewer comments, and kept the proposals moving. They were also able to report on progress to applicants who asked for updates.

At the end of Year 4, TOPS announced that April 30, 2015, is the deadline for completing all PIA-funded projects. The TOPS Program ends August 2015, and all Small Grants program reporting must be completed well before then. PIAs are approved for one year; consequently, TOPS will close the window for new applications from the beginning of Year 5. Applications for the smaller Micro Grants will continue to be accepted into the first quarter of Year 5, due to different reporting requirements, provided they are for short duration activities such as training workshops or defined learning events.

Enhanced Approach to Tracking Knowledge and Skills Transfer to Job

In Year 4, TOPS continued to conduct pre- and post-tests and satisfaction surveys to assess the quality of technical capacity-strengthening activities, and added steps within training events for participants to develop action plans for follow-on replication training or immediate skill application to fieldwork upon return to their projects.

In addition to this ongoing assessment and in response to a recommendation from the mid-term evaluation, TOPS undertook an additional strategy to examine more closely the effects it achieves through the transfer of knowledge and skills from TOPS-conducted or sponsored technical capacity-strengthening training workshops. TOPS negotiated an agreement with the Monterrey Institute for International Studies (MIIS) for graduate students to lead the initial research, under supervision of the TOPS M&E Specialist. The MIIS students sampled ‘consumers’

of TOPS inputs in all technical sectors by contacting former participants in their project settings. MIIS students were able to conduct these interviews in English, French, and Spanish.

In mid-Year 4, TOPS concluded its partnership with MIIS. The TOPS Team determined that the students had gathered as much information as they could and that TOPS needed more experienced M&E professionals to continue the research, conduct deeper data analysis, and conclude the initiative. TOPS consortium partner TANGO International is continuing the research and will produce a final report in Year 5.

The CORE Group, TOPS consortium partner for KM, began in Year 4 to develop a plan for follow up at three to six month intervals after knowledge-sharing events—specifically, with participants who filled out a Knowledge Acquisition, Application, and Sharing survey during the event—to determine, if possible, the effects of transferred knowledge and skills. TOPS also proposed to work with PVO partners to document effects of TOPS capacity strengthening and learning activities on their food assistance program performance. These assessment activities were not fully implemented, although elements were merged into the research activity described above. TOPS will continue this effort in Year 5.

Program Advisory Committee

The PAC is composed of senior representatives of the five TOPS consortium partners, and food security managers from the larger PVO community. The PAC acts as a ‘brain trust’ to provide advice and guidance for TOPS activities. The mid-term evaluation identified the PAC as a major resource and recommended that TOPS establish a stronger, more active and strategic role for the group.

In December 2014, TOPS held a one-day, facilitated strategic planning meeting with the full PAC to re-imagine its role and create a revised statement of purpose. PAC members developed a statement of principles and roles to transform the PAC from focusing solely on the internal workings of TOPS to assuming a broader role in providing a PVO voice on development policy and practice in consultation with USAID, FFP, and the larger community. PAC members agreed to write definitions for PAC roles, to be reviewed and agreed upon in subsequent meetings. The PAC also agreed that it would periodically write position or thought papers on issues of strategic interest to the PVO community and USAID.

The PAC met in June 2014 and reviewed the papers. It agreed on principles, on the creation of working groups for special, strategic purposes, and on a quarterly meeting schedule. In its September 2014 meeting, the PAC formed a steering committee, in response to FFP’s request to TOPS, to provide PVO input to FFP’s strategy design and development exercise over the next several months.

Communications, Documentation, and Publications

TOPS hired a Communications Coordinator who worked with TOPS staff to upgrade and disseminate a broad range of public information materials on TOPS during Year 4. These included revised and updated brochures and briefing papers on the TOPS Program, including information on the Small Grants program, the Leader with Associate Awards mechanism, and other aspects of the TOPS program.

TOPS also released several technical publications to the larger community, including the *TOPS Review of Promising Practices in Food for Peace Development Food Assistance Projects*, published in March 2014 and capping a joint effort with the implementing community to identify and promote practices associated with reductions in stunting for children under age five. In addition, TOPS technical specialists continued to work with their Task Forces and the implementing community to finalize the *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming*, to be produced as a legacy tool to sustain capacity-strengthening activities after the life of the TOPS program. This toolkit is based on the core competencies work conducted by TOPS staff and technical Task Forces throughout the life of the program. The *TOPS Commodity Management Handbook*, a pocket-sized guide designed for field-friendly use, was finalized in Year 4 and received enthusiastically by PVO commodity program staff.

Relations with USAID/FFP

A TOPS priority for Year 4 was to continue building strong, collaborative relationships with FFP in Washington and with USAID Missions in FFP programming countries. TOPS prioritized frequent meetings and consultations with the Agreement Officer's Representative and the Activity Manager, plus USAID/FFP advisors for gender and nutrition. To strengthen field connections, TOPS technical staff and senior managers conferred regularly with the Country Backstop Officers who are crucial liaisons with the FFP staff in the Missions. When organizing for any field-based activities proposed by TOPS and implementing partners, TOPS technical staff quickly established close contacts with Mission-based FFP staff, through Agreement Officer's Representatives and Country Backstop Officers, for open and clear communications.

Collaboration and communication was especially evident and helpful in developing TOPS technical capacity-strengthening workshops in Ethiopia and Uganda (ANRM training); DRC (TOPS Small Grant-funded CM echo training), and follow-on stakeholder activities to a previous nutrition training in Malawi and Madagascar (*TIPS for TOPS*). Close communications were also crucial to the success of regional learning events in Burkina Faso (the *Fifth Knowledge Sharing Meeting*, held in Ouagadougou for regional Francophone stakeholders), Niger (the launch workshop for REGIS-ER and REGIS-AG, funded by a USAID Associate Award and facilitated by TOPS), and Zimbabwe (the *USAID Zimbabwe Knowledge Summit - Lessons Learned* with FFP staff and development food assistance program implementing partners).

An important—and growing—relationship between TOPS and FFP is the one in which TOPS plays the role of effective convener of consultation, between FFP and the PVO community, on policy and practices for FFP development programming. In Year 3, FFP asked TOPS to lead a consultation with PVOs to review and recommend revisions to the guidance that FFP issues with its RFAs. Following up on this initiative, TOPS helped FFP to organize a PVO consultation in Q4 of Year 4 on proposed changes to RFA guidance and the design and structure of development proposals and project implementation. This half-day event brought together representatives of PVO implementing partners and FFP senior managers and directors. Participants worked in small groups to share their experiences and discuss ideas and the entire group participated in the dialogue during the reporting out of small group findings.

Late in Year 4, FFP asked TOPS to organize PVO input as FFP creates its new, long-term strategy. Subsequently, TOPS organized online discussions (Table 7), and arranged for a detailed session on the subject with FFP senior managers and PVO representatives at TOPS *Sixth Knowledge Sharing Meeting* in Washington, DC, in July 2014. Finally in Year 4, the TOPS PAC formed a working group to consult with FFP on strategy development.

Partner Involvement

Based on a mid-term evaluation recommendation, TOPS established a Primary Consortium Partner consultative group to meet periodically and consider issues such as staffing, individual partner work plans and other internal issues relevant to the TOPS consortium. Each consortium partner nominated a representative to the group; it is led by the TOPS award leader, Save the Children, and chaired by Save the Children's Associate Vice President / Hunger and Livelihoods Department.

The Primary Consortium Consultative Group met in January 2014, and agreed to meet semi-annually. However, it did not meet during the remainder of the year. The TOPS Program Director consulted individually with the senior management representatives of consortium partners, but for a variety of scheduling reasons, a full meeting did not occur.

Staffing and Internal Management

TOPS faced a number of staffing challenges in Year 4. In the latter months of Year 3, three key TOPS personnel—the senior specialists for M&E, KM and SBC—left for other positions. Two (M&E, KM) joined USAID and the third

took a more senior position with another PVO. The transition to the new SBC Specialist was relatively easy: Food for the Hungry (with USAID approval) promoted the assistant SBC Specialist to a senior role.

Filling the M&E and KM positions was more difficult. It took several months for TANGO International and the CORE Group to find suitable candidates whom TOPS and USAID could approve. The M&E position was filled at the beginning of Year 4, although the long delay affected progress for some months into the year. During the longer search for a qualified candidate for the KM position, TOPS was faced with organizing a major event (the *Fifth Knowledge Sharing Meeting* in Burkina Faso during Q1) without a KM Senior Specialist. The TOPS KM team and program management successfully designed and conducted the event in Ouagadougou—in French—through close, collaborative teamwork. TOPS hired the new KM Senior Specialist in February 2014.

The Communications Coordinator position was still vacant and the long-serving Program Coordinator also departed for other pursuits in Year 4. TOPS filled the Communications Coordinator position early in Year 4 when it negotiated the transfer of a communications coordinator from within Save the Children. This individual immediately tackled several long-pending communications priorities, such as updating TOPS information materials, assisting in finalizing publications, strengthening TOPS branding practices, and raising the TOPS public profile within the overall community of practice.

A new Program Associate to replace the departed Program Coordinator was hired in late June 2014.

D. TOPS YEAR 4 CHALLENGES

During Year 4, TOPS faced several key challenges:

- ***Implementing the Midterm Evaluation priority recommendations.***

(Information on these activities in Year 4 can be found in the section on Program Management.)

- ***Conducting two TOPS/FSN Network Knowledge Sharing Meetings in one year, without a full KM team.***

TOPS successfully designed and conducted a regional FSN Network Knowledge Sharing Meeting for Francophone Africa in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on November 18 to 20, 2014 -- without a Senior KM Specialist on staff (as noted in Section XX, Program Management). The meeting attracted approximately 160 participants. Without a KM Senior Specialist, the TOPS Team relied on close and supportive teamwork to achieve the successful result.

As a further challenge, TOPS planned for the meeting to be conducted totally in French, with wireless simultaneous translation (English-to-French and French-to-English) to ensure that the mostly Francophone participants could gain the maximum benefit from attending this knowledge sharing and learning event. TOPS hired a local professional translation firm, which performed perfectly throughout the event. A key lesson learned was the advantage of sending a TOPS technical specialist in advance to familiarize the translation team with technical development-related terms they would be hearing so they would not stumble during simultaneous translation.

With a Senior KM Specialist on staff from February 2014, TOPS successfully designed and conducted a large Knowledge Sharing Meeting in Washington DC on 10-11 July, attended by over 175 participants.

- ***Securing and successfully implementing the first TOPS Program Associate Award from USAID/Sahel.***

USAID/Sahel contacted TOPS, requesting technical assistance in knowledge management skills for designing and facilitating the launch workshop for the first two resilience-focused awards to be issued by USAID: the **Resilience and Economic Growth in The Sahel - Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER)** award and the **REGIS-Accelerated Growth**

(REGIS-AG) award. These will be implemented regionally in Niger and Burkina Faso. These awards are part of USAID's Feed the Future initiative.

The purpose of the workshop was to orient the partners to the USAID resilience strategy for the region and to give the partners an opportunity to present the main strategies and planned activities for their projects. These awards are expected to coordinate with other development activities already underway, such as FFP-funded development assistance projects in the region. Consequently, staff from these projects also participated.

The TOPS KM team worked with the USAID Mission staff in designing the learning sessions. TOPS also hired a fluent French-speaking facilitator, with extensive development programming experience, for this Francophone regional event. TOPS also managed the meeting logistics for the event, held in Niamey, Niger.

The Mission funded these special TOPS services by issuing an Associate Award -- the first Associate Award received by the TOPS Program.

- ***In collaboration with the FFP staff of the USAID Zimbabwe Mission, designing and implementing a new type of knowledge sharing activity -- a Knowledge Summit -- for in-country FFP programs.***

Since early Year 3, TOPS staff had worked on creating a scaled-down version of its large knowledge sharing meetings that could be implemented within a single country. With a working title of "knowledge summit," these would be designed to involve both the USAID/FFP staff and the implementing partners conducting FFP-funded programs within the country. Held annually, these workshops would review progress and findings in the previous year, analyze them, and then incorporate appropriate adjustments to the work plan for the following year. These events would also foster close, ongoing working relationships and understanding among FFP staff and project staff.

Earlier, the Zimbabwe USAID/FFP staff had conceived of having a workshop with their new development assistance implementing partners to study lessons learned from previous Zimbabwe assistance projects and incorporating beneficial practices into their new projects. In Year 3, they discussed this with TOPS staff. Given TOPS interest in creating country-specific "knowledge summits," it was a perfect opportunity to design and pilot one. From early in Year 4, TOPS worked closely with the Zimbabwe FFP staff to design the exercise and build a set of condensed case studies from other Zimbabwe assistance projects to guide the workshop process. TOPS recruited TOPS consortium partner TANGO International to introduce concepts of resilience and "theories of change" to the participants. The workshop was held on 19-21, 2014.

The USAID FFP staff and the project management and technical staff of the implementing organizations, CNFA and World Vision, and their partners (both international and local) were extremely pleased with the experience (see section PR4, Knowledge Sharing, for more detail). The partners reported they planned to adopt concepts and practices they had learned in the workshop (e.g., resilience and a recommended structure for describing their projects' Theories of Change) and incorporating them into their work plans for the coming year.

In Year 4, TOPS planned a different type of *Knowledge Summit* scheduled for October 2014 for Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the existing FFP-funded projects were entering their final year of implementation. FFP and the implementing partners, OICI and ACDI/VOCA, asked TOPS technical specialists in ANRM and nutrition to design and conduct *Guided Reflection for Learning Throughout the Program Cycle* in which lessons learned could be captured while also less formally providing technical guidance for any future activities. Unfortunately, because of the Ebola crisis, the workshop was cancelled. TOPS is currently planning a Knowledge Summit workshop for FFP and the implementing organizations of the new Malawi development assistance awards. In Year 4, plans for a similar type of *Knowledge Summit* – but at the start-up stage of new projects – was planned for Malawi.

In Year 4, TOPS invested significant time and effort into gathering input from all stakeholders in the design and development of materials and activities for this new type of knowledge sharing workshop. TOPS is encouraging FFP to include funding for these collaborative learning events in all new development assistance awards. FFP has shown considerable interest.

E. TOPS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ANALYTICAL DESCRIPTION OF PROGRESS

The Performance Management Plan can be found in **Attachment 2**. The monitoring systems previously put in place to track the PMP indicators have continued to function well in Year 4. Although some targets set in Year 1 may have been a bit ambitious, TOPS sees no need for any modifications to the PMP.

TOPS continues to **meet or exceed the targets set for the majority of indicators in the PMP** (38 percent exceeded plus 21 percent met, for a total of 59 percent met or exceeded).

Among the **five higher level Strategic Objective indicators**, TOPS met or exceeded the targets for 60 percent. In Year 4 TOPS has finally met the target (80 percent) for Indicator 4.0, *Percent of Small Grants projects (\$100,000 or under) that meet their planned objectives*, with four out of five Program Improvement Awards (PIAs) completed in Year 4 and meeting all objectives. One PIA, the *Markit* tool being developed by CARE and CRS, met most of the objectives but will use private funds to follow on with full field testing of the tool.

The target (75) for the higher-level indicator 5.0, **Number of organizations served by Micro Grants** was almost reached at 69, with this reflecting only the contribution from 3 Micro Grants completed or near completion by the end of Year 4; many Micro Grants will be completed in Year 5 with TOPS expecting to exceed the Year 5 target of 105 for this indicator. Similarly, the target (3) for indicator 2.4.1, *Number of tools created, field-tested or validated using Small Grants*, was not reached at 2; however, TOPS anticipates greatly exceeding the Year 5 annual (not cumulative) target of 3 with the number of PIAs and Micro Grants in progress.

Two higher-level indicators have continued to be exceeded in Year 4, with these reflecting targets for (2.0) post-test scores of participants in TOPS capacity-strengthening workshop and (3.0) TOPS recommended tools incorporated into FFP guidelines (2.0 target 80 percent, achievement 83 percent; 3.0 target 50 percent, achievement 67 percent). Satisfaction by workshop participants continues to remain high at 87 percent.

The higher-level target (28 total) for **tools in all phases** – from identification, to modification/creation, to recommendation/dissemination, and tracked use/adaptation by PVOs implementing Food for Peace-funded programming, Indicator 1.0 – was almost reached at 26 total in any phase (93 percent of target). In line with recommendations from TOPS mid-term evaluation, TOPS did not channel effort into additional identification of existing tools, but rather increased efforts to complete tools in process of modification or creation and expend additional effort in repeated dissemination of previously endorsed tools through the multiple communication channels TOPS has put in place.

The Year 4 cumulative target (18) for tools in the process of modification or creation is greatly exceeded by Year 4 at 28 (155 percent of target); the target (38) for existing tools (and/or tools modified/created) endorsed through TOPS was not reached at 19 (only 50 percent of target). Efforts in Year 5 will be directed at finalizing tools in process, promoting endorsement through the Task Forces, and dissemination.

In Year 4, TOPS conducted a **survey of practitioners** in the field and headquarter technical support and targets for three indicators were almost reached: 69 percent of respondents to the survey are aware of TOPS recommended tools (indicator 3a, Year 4 target 70 percent); 64 percent rate the tools as appropriate for their programs (indicator 2a, Year 4 target 70 percent); and 53 percent report using the tools (indicator 3b, Year 4 target 60 percent). A total of 67 staff responded to the survey, but only after multiple reminders from TOPS M&E Specialist and additional outreach with support from the TOPS KM team.

The cumulative target of five packaged **best practices disseminated** (Indicator 2.3.1) was not reached, with one report produced in Year 4, *TOPS Review of Promising Practices in Food for Peace Development Food Assistance*

Projects. However, this report is one of the ten most frequently downloaded resources from the TOPS-supported FSN Network web portal.

TOPS continues to support the dissemination of promising practices through **knowledge sharing activities**, and targets for indicators reflecting these activities have continued to be exceeded:

- Indicator 4b, *the number of participants attending FSN Network knowledge sharing meetings* (including large regional or domestic meetings, along with smaller special topic meetings), with the target (250) greatly exceeded at 776;
- Indicator 4.1.1, *the number of FSN Network topic-specific technical knowledge sharing meetings held*, with the target (5) greatly exceeded at 17.

The PMP reflects the fact that **knowledge sharing activities continue to be a key strength of the TOPS Program**. In Year 4, TOPS has exceeded targets for 6 indicators (or the majority of the 9 indicators under Program Result 4, Knowledge Sharing), has met targets for an additional two indicators, and has only not quite met the target for regional Interest Groups (target 8, achievement 5). Among targets exceeded, in addition to the two indicators noted above, the FSN Network bi-weekly newsletter continues to exceed annual targets (Year 4 target 20, achievement 61) and members of TOPS continually receive verbal acknowledgement from members of the food security community that the newsletter provides useful and timely information.

F. COMPARISON OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In Year 4, in addition to the continued success and achievement of key program activities, the TOPS Team feels the efforts expended in each of the four Performance Results areas of the TOPS Strategic Framework (PR1: Knowledge Capture; PR2: Knowledge Generation; PR3: Knowledge Application, and PR4: Knowledge Sharing) are visibly coming to fruition and this momentum will carry through in Year 5.

Efforts to capture, generate and disseminate useful tools for development food assistance programming are coalescing for each of the technical and cross-cutting specialty areas of TOPS, with 19 tools endorsed and disseminated through TOPS and an additional 28 in the process of modification or creation. One report on promising practices has been produced and disseminated, with plans for additional and new activity in this area in Year 5. Plans for producing the legacy product of a *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming*, based upon the core competencies established by TOPS for each of the technical and cross-cutting specialty areas, are on track.

TOPS capacity-strengthening technical training workshops continue to benefit participants, as shown by comparison of pre-/post-test scores and satisfaction survey. In Year 4, TOPS partially completed a process for follow-up with workshop participants to assess the knowledge application and transfer within Food for Peace-funded programming.

The multiple threads of knowledge sharing activities within the TOPS Program continue to be highly successful, with TOPS taking on a greater role each year in maintaining the originally proposed large regional and domestic knowledge sharing events while increasingly hosting additional special topic knowledge sharing events each year.

In particular, the TOPS Small Grants program has taken off in Year 4, with multiple new PIAs and Micro Grants awarded and with anticipation of many additional small grants early in Year 5.

G. COMPARISON OF BUDGET TO EXPENDITURES

As shown in **Attachment 4**, TOPS Financial Report for Year 4, a total of \$11,329,521.45 (or 72 percent) of the Years 1 through 4 budget of \$15,771,210 was spent on TOPS program activities between August 13, 2010 and August 31,

2014. This leaves the TOPS Program with a balance of \$4,441,689 at the end of Fiscal Year 4. Due to the sub-grantees' quarterly reporting cycle, this total does not include sub-grantee expenses that were made in Quarter 4 ending September 30, 2014.

TOPS experienced a significant increase in total expenditures during Year 4. TOPS expenses from September 1, 2014 to August 31, 2014 amounted to \$4,142,794, which is approximately 37 percent of TOPS overall spending.

TOPS is underspent in the following categories: Small Project Grants, Mercy Corps Sub-grant, and Indirect Costs.

Small Grants Awards

Included in this increase in expenditures is the TOPS Small Project Grants line item. The small grants spending for Year 4 totaled \$586,256 which is approximately 90 percent of the total small grants spending of \$653,260. Even with this sharp increase in spending, there is a significant amount of remaining unspent balance in the Small Project Grants line item as of the end of Year 4.

There were also more small grants approved in Year 4, including one Program Improvement Award application for a total amount of \$99,408. In addition, 15 Micro Grant applications were approved for a total of \$681,891. The total amount spent in Year 4 for the small grants that were approved in Year 4 totaled \$256,586, leaving a remaining balance of \$524,713 from approved small grants in Year 4 to be spent in Year 5, in addition to any new awards that will be approved in Year 5.

Mercy Corps Sub-grant

In Year 4, Mercy Corps (MC) made remarkable progress in increasing the number of program activities and, as a result, increasing expenditures. MC's spending for Year 4 totaled \$410,952, which is approximately 42 percent of MC's total spending since the start of the award. It is expected that MC will continue with this momentum, as multiple program activities are planned for Year 5.

Indirect Costs

When TOPS initially submitted its budget, an indirect cost rate of 17.04 percent was applied to all direct costs, including sub-agreements, with the exception of equipment greater than \$5,000. At present, Save the Children's new indirect costs are calculated at its provisional NICRA rate of 21.72 percent for direct expenses and 5.01 percent for sub-agreements.

Approximately 54 percent of TOPS overall budget goes to sub-agreements. Therefore, the drastic drop in indirect cost rate applied to sub-agreements, from 17.04 percent (as initially budgeted) to 5.01 percent, has resulted in considerable unspent funds in this category: a total amount of \$1,098,419 (as of Sep 1, 2014). As a result, TOPS will submit a revised budget in Year 5 to request realignment in its budget categories.

TOPS overspent in the following categories: Salaries, Fringe and Allowances, Travel and Per diem, and Consultants.

Salaries and Fringe/Allowances

Since the start of the award, each year the TOPS Program has experienced an increasing number of program activities and demands. To accommodate the increase in activities, the TOPS Program hired additional staff who were not budgeted for initially, which includes the staff hired to work on commodity management (CM) activities. As of the end of Year 3, the Salaries and Fringe/Allowances categories had a remaining unspent balance of \$221,735. This remaining unspent balance was not sufficient to accommodate the increase in activities and program staffing needs in Year 4. Therefore, the TOPS Program overspent in the Salaries and Fringe/Allowances categories. TOPS will be submitting a budget realignment request in Year 5.

Travel and Per Diem

To accommodate the increased demand for TOPS program activities, including commodity management activities, TOPS overspent in the Travel and Per Diem category. TOPS will be submitting a realignment request in Year 5.

Consultants

To accommodate increased demand of the TOPS program activities, including commodity management activities, TOPS overspent in the Consultants category. TOPS will be submitting a realignment request in Year 5.

H. TOPS PRIORITIES FOR YEAR 4

- Complete implementation of priority recommendations from TOPS Midterm Evaluation.
- Consider methods for deepening TOPS fund of—and access to—in-depth “intellectual capital” in important sector areas, e.g., knowledge management, evaluation, climate change approaches, resilience, gender.
- Maintain high level of programming commitment and delivery in fifth and last year of TOPS grant.
- Finalize edits to core competencies, decide upon final structure of self-assessment modules and package as the *TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming*.
- Finalize key tools which are in the process of creation or modification.
- Finalize at least one Training of Trainers guide for a key capacity-strengthening training activity in each technical and cross-cutting sector.
- Produce a follow-on document to the document disseminated in Year 4 – *TOPS Review of Promising Practices in Food for Peace Development Food Assistance Projects*, in which final evaluation reports prepared for FFP-funded projects between FY2006 and FY2010 were reviewed. This will be done through (a) a repeat of the exercise conducted to develop the above-mentioned document: review the final evaluation reports prepared for FFP-funded projects after FY2010 to identify MCHN and ANRM practices, along with cross-cutting focus on gender and SBC, and (b) for ANRM, through additional efforts to gather practices as part of scopes-of-work for development of guides and other tools.
- Increase the use of TOPS dissemination channels to prioritize awareness of TOPS products and outputs from the TOPS Small Grants Program, including (a) support for webinars by TOPS; (b) collaboration with other stakeholders; (b) additional highlights of products and tools in FSN Network bi-weekly newsletter, and (c) cross-links with (new) TOPS web page.
- Continue to provide and increase PVO and other stakeholder support for special topic knowledge sharing activities – in particular, to organize PVO consultations and gather PVO input into the development of the next Food for Peace Strategic Plan.

TOPS Strategic Objective:

Highest-quality information, knowledge, and best practices for improved methodologies in Title II food aid commodity program performance identified, established, shared, and adapted.

PR1: KNOWLEDGE CAPTURE: Knowledge and skill needs of audiences identified.														
Activity Description	2013-2014												Current Status	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep		
IPR 1.1. Skill levels of food security practitioners assessed through participatory and external approaches.														
1.1.a. Finalize pending technical and cross-cutting core competencies for field staff.					XX	XX	XX						Drafts completed in Year 3, minor modifications in Year 4 based on field testing (1.1.b. below).	
1.1.b. Field-test all technical and cross-cutting modules for the <i>TOPS Self-assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming</i> ; modify core competencies as indicated.		XX			XX			XX			XX		Three modules extensively field tested by end of Year 4; field testing of remaining three modules initiated second half of Year 4.	
1.1.c. Conduct technical assessment of skills among field practitioners: pre-/post-tests, follow-on action plans with follow-up, return follow-up visits, follow-on email contact, etc.	XX	XX		XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	Analysis pre-/post-test results completed on target; ongoing. Assessment of knowledge retention, skills transfer, etc., of participants in TOPS capacity-strengthening workshops partially completed in Year 4 by an external academic institution. More in-depth assessment by TANGO International on target, to be completed Q1 Year 5.	
1.1.d. Share data from self-assessment results with food security stakeholders.					XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.	

ACTIVITIES THREADED THROUGH PR1 KNOWLEDGE CAPTURE AND PR2 KNOWLEDGE GENERATION.													
Activity Description	2013-2014												Current Status
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
IPR 1.2. Relevant and current universe of appropriate tools (and gaps in tools) identified. IPR 2.1. User-friendly tools identified, modified or developed, and endorsed by the FSN Network. IPR 2.2. Tools adapted (created to fill gaps or modified) for use in appropriate formats.													
1.2.a. Gather relevant tools, conduct initial review & prioritize for Task Force review.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
1.2.b. Finalize identification of gaps in tools needed for effective programming.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
2.1.a. With Task Forces, review tools and endorse, or plan for modification.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	PMP targets not yet reached; ongoing.
2.1.b. With Task Forces, develop modifications/fill gaps in tools; review, endorse and disseminate.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	PMP targets not yet reached; ongoing.
2.1.c. Strengthen use of established TOPS communication channels to disseminate TOPS recommended tools.							XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target and improved in Year 4; ongoing.
2.1.d. Conduct survey to gather feedback on TOPS recommended tools.							XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	Conducted at end of Year 4; analysis of results pending for Q1 Year 5.
IPR 1.3. Promising practices identified and documented. IPR 2.3. Packaged information on promising practices shared with food security community for discussion and continuous improvement.													
1.3.a. Identify additional promising practices through new sources of information.				XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	Round one completed on target; ongoing.
1.3.b. Identify promising practices in use of a resilience measurement framework.		XX			XX			XX			XX		On target; ongoing.

ACTIVITIES THREADED THROUGH PR1 KNOWLEDGE CAPTURE AND PR2 KNOWLEDGE GENERATION.													
Activity Description	2013-2014												Current Status
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
IPR 1.3. and IPR 2.3 continued													
2.3.a. Document, disseminate and host events to discuss promising practices identified from review of FFP-funded project final evaluation reports (FY2006-2010).			XX			XX		XX	XX	XX		XX	Completed on target.
2.3.b. Share promising practices in use of a resilience measurement framework.			XX			XX			XX			XX	Completed on target.

PR 2: KNOWLEDGE GENERATION: Reliable, High-quality information synthesized and produced in user-friendly, appropriate formats. (See also ACTIVITIES THREADED THROUGH PR1 AND PR2, above.)													
Activity Description	2013-2014												Current Status
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
IPR 2.4 Knowledge and tools generated and disseminated through the TOPS Small Grants.													
2.4.a. Develop a learning agenda in each technical and cross-cutting area to highlight challenges to be emphasized in the TOPS Small Grants program.	XX			XX			XX			XX			Initiated in Year 4; pending for Year 5.
2.4.b. Develop TOPS Small Grant Challenge RFAs.	XX			XX			XX			XX			Challenge RFA pilot-tested for commodity management; pending roll-out in Year 5.
2.4.c. Review and approve small grants that document existing knowledge or generate new knowledge.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
2.4.d. Capture documentation from Small Grants to feed into TOPS dissemination channels.				XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target and improved in Year 4; ongoing.

PR 3: KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION: Effective and appropriate traditional and non-traditional skill delivery approaches and systems/ applications used.													
Activity Description	2013-2014												Current Status
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
IPR3.1. Capacity of food security practitioners strengthened through focused skill transfer.													
3.1.a. Hold regional and domestic capacity-strengthening workshops.	XX	XX			XX	XX		XX		XX			Plans increased with additional requests from stakeholders; modified plans on target.
3.1.b. Develop strategies for continued learning, transfer of knowledge and application of skills through non-traditional skills delivery.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
3.1.c. Develop training of trainer guides and other materials, including use of web-based opportunities, as a strategy to produce sustainable packages for knowledge transfer and application after the life of the program.			XX			XX			XX			XX	On target; ongoing.

PR 4: KNOWLEDGE SHARING: Information, skill, and knowledge exchange supported and expanded.													
Activity Description	2013-2014												Current Status
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
IPR 4.1. Physical and virtual community exchange forums and knowledge-sharing mechanisms supported and expanded.													
4.1.a. Strengthen outreach for the TOPS FSN Network.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
4.1.b. Continue strengthening the TOPS FSN Network Task Forces.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
4.1.c. Further develop strategies for sustainability of the TOPS FSN Network Task Forces.			XX			XX			XX			XX	Sustainability goal not yet reached; ongoing.

PR 4: KNOWLEDGE SHARING: Information, skill, and knowledge exchange supported and expanded.														
Activity Description	2013-2014												Current Status	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep		
4.1.d. Strengthen the TOPS FSN Network web portal functionality; make greater use of existing mechanisms to disseminate awareness of TOPS recommended tools and to gather information on tool use and effectiveness.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target and improved in Year 4; ongoing.
4.1.e. Strengthen the biweekly FSN Network e-newsletter.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
4.1.f. Plan and convene TOPS FSN Network (large, multi-topic) knowledge-sharing events.	XX	XX					XX	XX	XX	XX				Continues to exceed Performance Management Plan targets (Attachment 2).
4.1.g. Provide support for periodic (small, limited-topic) knowledge-sharing events.	XX		XX	XX	XX	XX		XX				XX		Exceeded work plan for Year 4.
4.1.h. Participate in relevant, existing food-security related networks.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
IPR 4.2. Local and regional knowledge sharing and networking strengthened														
4.2.a. Foster field-level networking.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	Objectives not yet reached; ongoing.
4.2.b. Continue strengthening the TOPS FSN Network Discussion Groups.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target and improved in Year 4; ongoing.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT													
Activity Description	2013-2014												Current Status
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
Develop a plan and put into place activities to look more closely at the effects TOPS achieves through transfer of knowledge and skills.				XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	Target not yet reached with action initiated in Year 4; ongoing Year 5.
Align Small Grants Program more closely to TOPS, FSN Network, and Program Advisory Committee (PAC) priorities.	XX			XX			XX			XX			On target; ongoing.
Engage PAC more vigorously and directly to advise and focus TOPS and partners on longer term strategic goals.	XX			XX			XX			XX			On target and improved in Year 4; ongoing.
Review Program Management Team and staffing to determine need for new or revised structure, positions and skills strengthening.	XX			XX			XX			XX			Ongoing.
Establish a Primary Consortium Partner consultative group to meet periodically and consider issues relevant to primary partners.	XX			XX			XX			XX			Established in Year 4.
Maintain and streamline relations with FFP, including USAID Missions and staff and CBOs.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
Prepare and submit a response to the detailed recommendations from the mid-term evaluation.				XX	XX	XX	XX						Pending Year 5.

PROGRAM MONITORING & EVALUATION SYSTEMS													
Activity Description	2013-2014												Current Status
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
Maintain established monitoring system.	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	On target; ongoing.
Maintain a quarterly TOPS Dashboard.			XX			XX			XX			XX	On target and improved in Year 4; ongoing.
Conduct surveys of target beneficiaries to gather information on awareness, use, and effectiveness of TOPS-recommended tools.							XX		XX		XX		Survey conducted and analyzed at the end of Year 4.
Prepare information on annual PMP results for TOPS Annual Progress Reports.	XX											XX	On target; ongoing.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
1.0 Number of tools in each phase. Each tool will go through four phases: a. Identification b. Modification/creation c. Recommendation/ share d. Adaptation/use	5	28	28	28	28	n/a	32 13 8 6 5	24 7 12 4 1	26 0 12 4 10		Annual targets A list of tools at each phase can be provided upon request. See also Table 1 and Table 2 in narrative ¹ .
2.0 Percent of Title II implementers scoring 70% or higher in post-test assessment on key knowledge, skills, and practices for improved program performance.	60%	60%	70%	80%	80%	56%	87%	75%	83%		Annual targets The majority of participants continue to show greatly increased knowledge from pre-test to post-test during TOPS capacity-strengthening workshops.
3.0 Percent of FSN Network Task Force recommended tools incorporated into FFP guidelines, information bulletins.	n/a	20%	40%	50%	60%	n/a	64%	50%	67%		Annual targets 10 of the 15 tools endorsed by the end of Year 3 were cited in the 2014 RFA guidance.
4.0 Percent of Small Grants projects (\$100,000 or under) that meet their planned objectives.	n/a	n/a	80%	80%	80%	n/a	n/a	n/a	80%		Annual targets Five PIA grants were completed in Year 4. One of the five – the <i>MARKit</i> tool – did not complete all objectives by the end of the grant. It will be field tested and disseminated through use of private funds early in Year 5.
5.0 Number of organizations served by Micro Grants.	n/a	15	45	75	105	n/a	122	n/a	69		Annual targets In Year 4, this indicator is calculated from 3 Micro Grants that completed activities during Year 4 and a few of the Micro Grants in progress in Year 4. Many Micro Grants will be completed early in Year 5 counted towards this indicator in Year 5.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
PR1: KNOWLEDGE CAPTURE: Knowledge and skill needs of audiences identified.											
1a. An effective system is in place for periodic knowledge and skills self-assessment of Title II functional areas by Title II implementing organizations.	n/a	1	1	1	1	n/a	Partially complete	Partially complete	Partially complete		Cumulative target As of Year 4, field testing has been completed for all technical and cross-cutting areas of core competencies. The TOPS Self-Assessment Toolkit for Effective Development Food Assistance Programming will be completed in Year 5.

¹ Note that links to separate surveys for recommended tools in all technical and cross-cutting sectors were available but response was not comprehensive for all tools.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
IPR1.1: Skill levels of food security practitioners assessed through participatory and external approaches.											
1.1.1 Percent of Title II core competency areas defined by the Task Forces.	75%	80%	100%	100%	100%	75%	80%	83%	100%		Cumulative target Core competencies have been developed for all technical and cross-cutting areas.
IPR1.2: Relevant and appropriate tools identified.											
1.2.1 Number of tools relevant to food security programs identified.	5	32	59	86	113	5	32	56	56		Cumulative target All tools are first identified before they progress to other phases and this is a cumulative figure for the life of the TOPS Program. In line with MTE recommendations, in Year 4 TOPS focused efforts on completing modifications or creations of tools towards endorsement and did not identify new tools.
IPR1.3: Promising practices identified and documented.											
1.3.1 Number of reports documenting promising practices produced.	n/a	1	1	1	1	n/a	draft semi-complete	1	1		Cumulative target This document was finalized in Year 3 with promising practices identified for maternal-child nutrition, ANRM and cross-cutting gender and SBC.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
PR2: KNOWLEDGE GENERATION: Reliable, high-quality information synthesized and produced in user-friendly appropriate formats.											
2a. Average score on user perception survey of appropriateness, efficacy and satisfaction in use of the FSN Task Force recommended tools.	n/a	n/a	70	70	70	n/a	n/a	n/a	64%		Annual targets Survey was conducted in Year 4. In addition to the 64% that rated tools as appropriate for programming, on average 61% also rated the tools as user friendly and 63% would recommend them to others. See also indicator 3a. and 3b.
IPR 2.1: Existing user-friendly, effective tools identified and endorsed by the FSN Network [Task Forces].											
2.1.1 Number of effective and user friendly existing tools endorsed by the Task Force members.	5	16	27	38	49	5	12	16	19		Cumulative targets See narrative for list of tools (either <u>existing or modified/created by TOPS</u>) endorsed.
IPR 2.2: Tools adapted (created to fill gaps or modified) for Title II grantee use in user-friendly and appropriate formats.											
2.2.1 Number of existing tools modified or new tools created and endorsed .	n/a	6	12	18	24	n/a	4	16	28		Cumulative target See narrative for list of tools modified or created and <u>pending</u> endorsement.
IPR 2.3: Packaged information on promising practices and approaches generated.											
2.3.1 Number of packaged approaches and best practices generated and disseminated.	n/a	3	4	5	5	n/a	0	0	1		Cumulative target The package of promising practices was disseminated with two all-day meetings, one focusing on Maternal-Child Nutrition, and the second on ANRM, with cross-cutting gender and SBC.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
IPR 2.4: Knowledge and tools generated through the TOPS small grants and fed into the dissemination channels.											
2.4.1 Number of tools created, field-tested or validated using Small Grants.	n/a	1	2	3	3	n/a	0	2	2		Annual targets From the 5 PIA grants, 2 produced tools in Year 3 and 1 produced the Dietary Diversity and Determinants Survey (DDDS) in Year 4 (2 did not produce tools but strengthened and documented field activities). Multiple tools were in progress under Micro Grants; 1 Micro Grant tool – Dry Zone Vulnerability Assessment – was completed in Year 4.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
PR3: KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION Effective and appropriate traditional and non-traditional skill delivery approaches and systems/applications used.											
3a. Percent of Title II implementers <i>aware of at least 50%</i> of key FSN Network Task Force recommended tools.	n/a	50%	60%	70%	75%	n/a	63%	n/a	69%		Cumulative target Survey was conducted in Year 4 and respondents replied to surveys relevant to their technical area (for example, ANRM or M&E as the denominator). These results were then used to calculate at the overall percentage. See also indicator 2a., above, and 3b., below.
3b. Percent of projects <i>reporting use</i> of the FSN Network Task Force recommended tools.	n/a	40%	50%	60%	70%	n/a	79%	n/a	53%		Cumulative target Results for individual tools ranged from 14% to 82%. See more detail in section E for additional analysis of results.
3c. Average score (normalized) on post-training satisfaction survey.	70%	80%	80%	80%	80%	87%	90%	88%	87%		Annual targets Surveys show satisfaction in all aspects, from training methodology, facilitation, content, and relevance to Food for Peace-funded programming.
IPR 3.1: Capacity of food security practitioners strengthened through focused skill transfer.											
3.1.1 Number of regional or global multi-sectoral training events held.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	2	3		Cumulative target Note that capacity-strengthening workshops have followed on to TOPS FSN Network regional knowledge sharing meetings and have been held in Southern Africa Region in Year 1, East Africa in Year 2, and Francophone Africa in Year 4.
3.1.2 Number of staff trained through country level, regional or global training events.	20	232	292	312	192	26	316	311	350		Annual targets Participant interest continues to meet or exceed expectations of the TOPS Program.
3.1.3 Percent of TOPS training events that integrate gender considerations/ principles in content of sessions.	80%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		Annual targets Gender is integrated in all TOPS technical capacity strengthening workshops.

Indicator Definition	Targets					Achievements					COMMENTS
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	
PR4: KNOWLEDGE SHARING Information, skill and knowledge exchange forums supported and expanded.											
4a.Number of members regularly participating in FSN Network Task Forces.	30	40	40	40	40	70	122	65	50		Annual targets The Task Forces remain active but some members may be spending their time in the increasing number of TOPS special topic knowledge sharing meetings.
4b. Number of participants attending FSN Network knowledge sharing meetings.	250	250	250	250	250	282	251 ²	780 ³	776 ⁴		Annual targets The knowledge sharing events in Francophone Africa and DC attracted 308 participants, and an additional 457 attended special topic knowledge sharing events.
4c. Average score (normalized) on post FSN Network knowledge sharing meeting satisfaction survey.	80	80	80	80	80	74%	80%	87%	80%		Annual targets Meetings are consistently well received by the community.
4d. Average number of members participating in FSN Network listservs and discussion groups.	500	850	1000	1200	1200	750	1175	1550	2005		Annual targets Community interest continues to exceed expectation of the TOPS Program.
4e. Number of downloads from the FSN Network Website.	n/a	1k	1.5k	1.5k	1.5k	n/a	2.1k	7.4k	8.5k		Annual targets Website was launched in April 2012; community interest continues to exceed expectations.
IPR 4.1: Physical and virtual community exchange forums and knowledge sharing mechanisms supported and expanded.											
4.1.1 Number of FSN Network topic-specific technical meetings held.	2	5	5	5	5	4	4	15	17		Annual targets A full list of TOPS special topic knowledge sharing events appears in Table 8.
4.1.2 Number of FSN Network e-newsletters (or related format) generated that share FSN Network information, products and services.	4	20	20	20	20	7	26	41	61		Annual targets E-newsletter has been consistently produced on a biweekly basis and special issues were released to respond to needs of stakeholders.
4.1.3 Number of hits on FSN Network Website.	n/a	10k	25k	40k	50k	n/a	20.7k	32.9k	39.7k		Annual targets Website launched in April 2012; community use of the site has been growing continuously.
IPR 4.2: Local and regional knowledge sharing and networking strengthened											
4.2.1 Number of regional interest groups actively sharing knowledge on key implementation issues.	n/a	5	6	8	10	n/a	6	5	5		Cumulative target Five interest groups (NALAN, DBC Anglophone, DBC Francophone, Early Warning and AME) are supported via FSN Network Web Portal. One (Care Groups Forward) is supported via an email listserv and periodic online meetings.

² This total does not include participants at events that TOPS co-facilitated, such as the IFPRI-sponsored event on resilience in December 2012, nor TOPS collaboration with FANTA-III Project in two events presenting the second Food Aid Food Security Assessment results.

³ This total does not include participants at events that TOPS co-facilitated, such as FAFSA-2 presentation of findings, FFP Global meeting or the SPRING N-GLEE meetings.

⁴ This total does not include participants at events that TOPS contributed to but which were hosted by others.

TOPS Annual Report Year 4
Attachment 3: Summary of TOPS Small Grants Active Year 1 through Year 4

Micro Grants and Program Improvement Awards, as of Year 4

Name of Grant Activity	Implementing Organization	Period of Performance	Description	Grant Amount	Status
Micro Grants					
Father Solution to Reproductive and Maternal Health Challenges	PCI	Jul 8 2013 to Jun 30 2014	Pilot program on SBC: how linking men to Care Groups increases household and community behavior change in reproductive and maternal health practices.	\$29,925.00	Grantee withdrew/unable to implement.
Sustainability Toolkit	PCI	Dec 3 2013 to Nov 30 2014	Develop, test, disseminate and foster use of a sustainability toolkit by food security practitioners in PCI operational areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America.	\$49,571.77	Implementation Underway
Post PRIZE Monitoring	CRS	Jan 1 2014 to Dec 31 2014	A pilot to measure the sustainability of infrastructure and livelihood activities and overall resilience of communities, determining enabling and inhibiting factors within them.	\$49,310.00	Implementation Underway
TAG Meeting	CORE Group	Dec 3 2013 to Nov 30 2014	Host a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting and develop a position paper to review the implications of current innovations, scale up and research on Care Groups in Title II programs.	\$47,040.00	Implementation Underway
Management Training	CORE Group	Dec 3 2013 to Nov 30 2014	Develop a field-based training on leadership and management that is focused on Title II consortia.	\$25,780	Implementation Underway
Warehouse Safety Guide	PCI	Dec 18 2013 to Nov 30 2014	Develop a CM Warehouse Staff Safety Guide, field test and disseminate it to Title II implementers	\$50,000.00	Implementation Underway
Learning About Gender Integrated Programming	Lutheran World Relief	Dec 3 2013 to Nov 30 2014	With multiple stakeholders, gather and disseminate lessons on integrating gender in the project cycle.	\$49,839.84	Implementation Underway
Functional Numeracy for FSN	AgriTech Talk International UK	Jan 1 2014 to Dec 31 2014	Pilot aims to achieve increased level of resilient food security, improved income and reduced poverty through improved decision-making and increased efficiency in rural enterprises, through improved numeracy.	\$49,055.38	Implementation Underway
Dry Zone Vulnerability Assessment	Mercy Corps	Jan 3 2014 to July 31 2014	See description, below.	\$49,959.00	COMPLETED
IYCF- E toolkit	Save the Children	03 Feb to 31 Jan 2015	Implement the "Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergency (IYCF-E)" toolkit	\$41,291.60	Implementation Underway
DBC Training in Nairobi	International Medical Corps	Apr 1 2014 to Nov 30 2014	Design, hold workshop to design a behavior change strategy. Sessions include training of trainers, information sharing and two case studies.	\$46,341.00	Implementation Underway
Designing and Applying a Resilience Threshold	Mercy Corps	Jun 5 2014 to Mar 31, 2015	Develop, apply and share a resilience threshold using Household Economy Approach (HEA) outcome analysis that	\$33,661.86	Implementation Underway

Name of Grant Activity	Implementing Organization	Period of Performance	Description	Grant Amount	Status
Using the Household Economy Approach			will systematically identify when households have reached a point where they should be able to respond to shocks.		
Guide for Effective Coordination – Guatemala	PCI	June 5 2014 to March 31 2014	Develop guidelines to improve collaboration and integration among Title II Grantees and Implementers delivering Title II food aid programming.	\$50,000.00	Implementation Underway
Change through Culture	The Grandmother Project	Apr 4 2014 to Nov 30 2014	Improve the quality and effectiveness of community programs to promote sustainable change in nutrition norms and practices by providing training on culturally-relevant and effective grandmother inclusive approach.	\$44,642.00	Implementation Underway
Barrier Analysis	Mercy Corps	Jun 18 2014 to Dec 31 2014	Identify barriers and facilitators in order to promote desired behavior among small agriculture families to prevent mycotoxin contamination via improved maize harvest and post-harvest practices.	\$49,778.36	Implementation Underway
CM Echo Training	Food For the Hungry	May 8 2014	See description, below.	\$45,620.12	COMPLETED
Designing the Future of Nutrition SBCC at Scale	GAIN		Fund travel of representatives to attend an innovative SBC Conference. These participants work in policy, development and implementation of nutrition programs, and bring critical perspectives from the Global South (including from Title II and Feed the Future priority countries) to enrich the learning process and follow-on documentation that will be disseminated broadly throughout the food security community.	\$49,837.00	Under review by USAID ¹⁸
Designing Resilience Through Seed Systems	CRS	Pending	Increase poor and vulnerable farmer productivity and farm gate gross margins through sustained access to good quality seed of improved varieties	\$36,465.87	Cancelled after FFP approval. Applicant unable to sign grant due to change in staff.
Mapping Guidelines	CARE	New proposal in Year 5	Finalize the “Mapping Guidelines” (a complement to “Introductory Guidelines to Participatory Rangeland Management in Pastoral Areas”) publication, with case studies to demonstrate the successful application of participatory resource mapping, and its contribution to improved rangeland management and health, and pastoral livelihoods and resilience	\$49,896.00	To be canceled by TOPS. Applicant is unresponsive to FFP questions.
Floods and Droughts Through a Gendered	GOAL	New proposal in Year 5	Implement a project that will provide evidence based recommendations to improve resilience and Disaster Risk	\$50,000.000	Awaiting responses to FFP’s review questions

¹⁸ Approved October 2014 (Year 5)

Name of Grant Activity	Implementing Organization	Period of Performance	Description	Grant Amount	Status
Lens; Mitigating strategies for women, girls, boys, and men in Malawi			Reduction (DRR) programming tailored to groups' differing experiences, needs and strengths during floods and droughts. The project will be implemented in Malawi		
Training of trainers workshop in the Essential Nutrition Actions Framework and Tools for Health Providers and Community Volunteers	CORE Group	New proposal in Year 5	Host a training of trainers workshop in the Essential Nutrition Actions Framework and Tools for Health Providers and Community Volunteers	\$47,377.08	Awaiting FFP review.
Potential of Nutrition-Sensitive Conservation Agriculture	Concern Worldwide	New proposal in Year 5	Explore the potential, in Zambia, of nutrition-sensitive conservation agriculture, whose primary goals revolve around the sustainable intensification of agriculture through better soil fertility management.	\$32,219.00	Under TOPS review
Technical Guide on Gender-Sensitive SBC strategies that lead to improved nutrition outcomes	CORE Group	New proposal in Year 5	Analyze interventions related to nutrition with the broader lens of gender equality to produce more learning about the extent to which gender-sensitive programming leads to improved nutritional outcomes from pregnancy to two years.	\$43,726.41	Under TOPS review
Post Project Evaluation of Malawi WALA Service Provider Initiative	World Vision	New proposal in Year 5	Assess the effectiveness of the fee-based service provider model in sustaining project interventions. Systematically gather and analyze evidence on the performance of fee-based service providers.	\$50,000.00	Under TOPS review.
Program Performance Tracking (PPT) tool	CARE	New proposal in Year 5	Adapt the PPT tool and training materials with a nutrition focus in selected communities in the Nutrition at the Center program, document the process, and develop a tool	\$44,513.69	Under TOPS review.
Data for Decision-Making (DDM) Learning Program	CARE	New proposal in Year 5	Examine use of data to improve program quality and provide an overview from the beginning of programs using the Plan-Do-Study-Act program improvement cycle	\$50,000.00	Under TOPS review.
Assessment Tool	The Grandmother Project	New proposal in Year 5	Develop a Rapid Assessment Tool to identify household roles and influences related to child nutrition /health	\$49,972.00	Under TOPS review

Name of Grant Activity	Implementing Organization	Period of Performance	Description	Grant Amount	Status
Program Improvement Awards (PIAs)					
I-SMART	ACDI/VOCA	Feb 1 2013 to Jan 31 2014	Develop and pilot a cost-effective electronic beneficiary registration and tracking system to improve the accuracy of reporting and allow for analyses to determine impact associated with different interventions.	\$99,763.65	COMPLETED
Diet Quality Survey	CRS	Jan 1 2013 to Dec 31 2013	Through pilot testing and analysis, improve a survey-based assessment tool that is adapted from the Household Dietary Diversity Score and is used to assess beneficiaries' diet quality, identify nutritional gaps, and provide programming recommendations for addressing these gaps.	\$96,425.00	COMPLETED
Integration of the Care Group MCHN BCC Model and the GROW Social and Economic Development Model	PCI	May 1 2013 to Apr 30, 2014	Evaluate the effectiveness of integrating Care Group and GROW methodologies on health and nutrition behaviors through a quasi-experimental (case/control) study design; identify lessons learned and assess their implications for taking this pilot experience to scale and improving future food aid programming; document and disseminate the results of the study.	\$100,000	COMPLETED
Regional Agricultural Marketing Production of <i>Super Gari</i>	OIC International, with World Initiative for Soy in Human Health	Jan 1 2013 to Dec 31 2013	Promote the production and consumption of the fortified food product <i>Super Gari</i> , produced in Liberia, to improve nutrition and enhance local economic development as it becomes more widely used and commercially available.	\$100,000	COMPLETED
MARKit	CARE with CRS	Jan 1 2013 to Dec 31 2013	Develop the <i>Market Analysis and Response Kit (MARKit)</i> to empower development food assistance organizations to design, monitor, and evaluate programs that are responsive to local market conditions; pilot by Local Regional Purchase (LRP) Learning Alliance members around the world, then disseminate to the wider food security community.	\$99,984.50	COMPLETED
Evaluation of a Post-Harvest Extension under the HORT CRSP in Sub-Saharan Africa	World Food Logistics Organization (WFLO)	Aug 1 2014 to Apr 30, 2015	Gather information on capacity-building outcomes, best practices, gender issues, and evidence of success or failure of the five major components of the recently completed HORT CRSP pilot project on extension of postharvest technologies in Sub-Saharan Africa.	\$99,408.31	Implementation Underway
I-SMART (v2)	ACDI/VOCA	Sep 5 2014 to Apr 30 2015	Improve the Information System for Management, Analysis & Reporting Timeliness (I-SMART).	\$99,944.89	Implementation Underway

Name of Grant Activity	Implementing Organization	Period of Performance	Description	Grant Amount	Status
Reading and Responding to Your Baby	Food for the Hungry	Sep 5 2014 to April 30 2015	Conduct a pilot to explore feasibility of teaching recognition of infant behavior and feeding cues to Q'ueqhi' mothers in rural Guatemala in order to improve breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices.	\$99,641.28	Implementation Underway
Care Groups in Emergencies	IMC	Oct 10 2014 to Apr 30 2015	Use of the Care Groups approach in emergencies appears to provide additional benefits including increasing social cohesion and providing psychosocial support in the midst of traumatic situations.	\$100,000.00	Waiting to sign the grant agreement
Integrating Gender throughout a Project's Life Cycle toolkit	Land O'Lakes		Develop the second edition of this toolkit via a collaborative process with multiple stakeholders and expanding sections on food security, nutrition, integrating men through a gender equality lens, and best practices in women's programs.	\$99,803.00	Under review by USAID ¹⁹
Building on Community Strengths: Identifying and Addressing the Social and Cultural Aspects of Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition	GOAL		Implement evidence-based SBC interventions, strengthen the household and community based family health promotion, and create an enabling environment for adoption of positive health behaviors in West Hararghe, Oromo Region, Ethiopia.	\$94,325.06	Under review by USAID ²⁰
Nurturing Connection: a behavior change tool for identifying and addressing barriers to gender equality	Helen Keller International		HKI will fill a gap by revising and piloting the <i>Nurturing Connections</i> curriculum, a behavior change communication intervention that aims to increase women's empowerment via group critical discussions of the domains of empowerment that have the highest impact on women's and households' health and well-being. These may include: control over resources, control over income, unequal food distribution, and women's mobility and participation in markets. HKI originally piloted <i>Nurturing Connections</i> in Bangladesh (2013) and notes continued interest in Bangladesh and internationally]	\$88,478.00	Under review by USAID ²¹

¹⁹ Approved October 2014 (Year 5)

²⁰ Approved October 2014 (Year 5)

²¹ Approved October 2014 (Year 5)

TOPS Budget versus Expenditures, from August 13, 2010 through August 31, 2014

Line Items	Year 1 to 4 Budget (US \$)	Actual through 08/31/2014 (US \$)	Balance as of 09/01/2014 (US \$)
001. Salaries	\$2,616,204.00	\$2,672,113.76	(\$55,909.76)
002. Fringe and Allowances	\$652,593.00	\$655,489.73	(\$2,896.73)
003. Travel and Per Diem	\$269,847.00	\$282,584.45	(\$12,737.45)
004. Equipment	\$62,856.00	\$27,306.21	\$35,549.79
005. Consultants	\$232,488.00	\$295,783.67	(\$63,295.67)
006. Supplies/ODC	\$162,660.00	\$85,346.13	\$77,313.87
007. Small Project Grants	\$2,671,078.00	\$653,259.58	\$2,017,818.42
008. Training and Workshops	\$959,971.00	\$782,793.33	\$177,177.67
009. CORE Group	\$1,838,168.00	\$1,695,190.47	\$142,977.53
010. Food for the Hungry	\$1,202,631.00	\$917,014.23	\$285,616.77
011. Mercy Corps	\$1,570,090.00	\$979,707.21	\$590,382.79
012. TANGO International	\$1,236,474.00	\$1,085,202.02	\$151,271.98
Total Direct Costs	\$13,475,060.00	\$10,131,790.79	\$3,343,269.21
Indirect Costs	\$2,296,150.00	\$1,197,730.66	\$1,098,419.34
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	\$15,771,210.00	\$11,329,521.45	\$4,441,688.55